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THE
OLD MAIDEN'S TALISMAN
AND OTHER
STRANGE TALES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"CHARTLEY;" "THE INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN;"
AND "THE GENTLEMAN IN BLACK."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
BULL AND CHURTON, HOLLES STREET.

1834.

LONDON :
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P E T E R S N O O K :

A TALE OF THE CITY.

(CONTINUED.)

VOL. III.

B



PETER SNOOK,

A TALE OF THE CITY.

CHAPTER V.

“HALLO! do you mean to lay a-bed all day?” shouted old Molly, as she thundered at Ephraim Hobson’s chamber door about eight o’clock on the morning after his unusual aberration from the paths of propriety.

The poor fellow was of course in a sad state both of body and mind; but, after gazing wildly round for a few seconds, a sense of the important duties which he had to perform, in order

to secure the credit of "the concern," rushed upon him, and he jumped up, dressed himself, and ran down into the shop.

For the next two hours he was busily engaged there in various contrivances to conceal the scantiness of "the stock." He cut pieces of pasteboard of a fitting length, and rolled and tied them up in blue paper, to appear like pieces of Irish linen; brought up some old broken boxes out of the cellar, corded them strongly, and placed them against the walls and the counters, with their best sides outward. Then he hung up pieces of calico, marked in large characters with the names of various commodities, before the empty shelves, and, finally, collected the few remnants that his master had left behind, and scattered them about the counters in a disorderly manner, as though he had just been exhibiting them to a customer.

“ I can do no better,” said he, at length, in an exhausted state ; “ little did I ever think to see the day that I should wish nobody would come and ask for a single article. I wish it would begin to rain cats and dogs ! Bless my heart, how thirsty I am ! Where’s master now, I wonder ? I hope he’s not so bad as I am, or I ’m sure he’s not fit for business.”

Here old Molly, who was a kind-hearted old soul at bottom, though she had her odd ways, as most old bachelors’ old servants have, brought him a basin of tea and a buttered roll.

“ Don’t talk to me, Molly, pray,” said Ephraim, “ I’m ashamed enough of myself without that. There, give me the tea — I can’t eat anything ;” and, drinking the welcome beverage as quickly as possible, he added, “ Bring me another, that’s a good woman.”

“ Ay, ay,” replied Molly, “ I thought how ’twould be when you came to yourself !” and

without saying more she went away, because, as she told him afterward, she could not find it in her heart "to smite a sinner when he was sitting on the stool of repentance."

Scarcely had she disappeared, when the shop-door opened. Ephraim looked round, for the first time in his life, with dread lest it should be a customer coming in.

"Bill for payment," said a smartly-dressed young man, stepping forward and opening a large black leather case, from which he drew forth the said document, and presented it across the counter.

"All right," said Ephraim; "'Three hundred and sixteen pounds seventeen shillings—Pester and Co.' Write the receipt, sir, and I'll go and fetch the check, which master left last night before he went away."

The bankers' clerk did as he was directed, and when he received the check observed,

“ Oh ! you keep cash at our house, I see ; I didn’t know that, as I am but lately come. I used to be in your line of business before, and lived with Puffit and Blarney, in Bond Street. Why, you seem to do with very little stock here ! how do you contrive that ? ”

“ Why,” stammered Ephraim, “ the fact is, that just at this season of the year our customers are all out of town at Margate, and so we buy from hand to mouth, you see.”

The young man had too much occupation to be able to gossip, so, after a brief remark or two, he went on with his round of collecting ; but ever and anon, during his walk, the singularly confused manner of Hobson, and the singularly meagre, “ poverty-struck ” appearance of the shop, recurred to his mind, for, having practised similar arts himself, he had detected those of the ingenious shopman. The consequence of these ruminations was, that when he got

home, about two o'clock, he asked the head-clerk if Peter Snook's check was good for three hundred and sixteen pounds odd.

"No, not for a farthing," was the reply, after the ledger had been consulted; "he has overdrawn already for a hundred. But he spoke to Mr. Bluff yesterday about it, and so we know he's pressed for money, but, as he's very regular always, I dare say it will be all right in an hour or two."

"Well," observed the young man, "I don't know how they manage business in Bishops-gate Street; but if his shop was at the west end, I should think he was going to bolt."

Here there was a whispering explanation between the senior and junior-clerks, during which Mr. Butt, the retailer of gin, came in, and having made his deposit for the day, requested to speak with Mr. Bluff, and was accordingly ushered into that gentleman's private counting-house.

“ Good morning, Mr. Butt,” said the banker ;
“ take a seat, will you ? What can I do for
you ? any discounts, eh ? If you have, tell me
the amount, that’s all ; your indorsement’s
enough, and as we happen to be pretty flush
of cash just now, shall be happy to oblige
you.”

“ Hang all obligations !” exclaimed Mr.
Butt. “ No, no, it an’t nothing of that sort ;
I wants none o’ your dishclouts—dishcounts—
what d’ye call ’em ? When I takes bills, I
pays ’em away instead o’ ready money, or else
puts ’em into my tin box, and there lets ’em
’bide till they comes due.”

“ Ha, ha, ha !” laughed Mr. Bluff, “ you ’re
a droll hand, Master Butt ; it is not every one
that can do that, let me tell you.”

“ May be not, may be not,” observed Mr.
Butt ; “ perhaps they don’t go the right way
to work. Howsomever, I am under a bit of
an obligation to you, and so thought it no

more than common polite to come and just say thankee for recommending me a customer."

"I don't recollect," said the banker, musing ;
"really, I can't justly remember having done anything of the kind."

"What !" roared the spirit-dealer, "not Peter Snook ! — him as I sold a hogshead of the best gin to, and sent down to Queenhithe last night ! Warn't he sitting with you in this here very blessed place yesterday, when I came in to pay my money ?"

"Why, that's perfectly true," said Mr. Bluff, "but I am equally sure that I never recommended him to buy a hogshead of gin of you or anybody else."

"Then he's a confounded liar !" exclaimed Mr. Butt, "and I suppose I'm done ! But mind, I shall look to you for the money, for one of your clerks told me yesterday a'ternoon he was perfectly *compos mentis*."

"Stop a minute, my good sir," said the

banker, "there is a mistake somewhere, that's clear; but I should think you needn't be afraid of your money, as Mr. Snook has been always very regular with us; though what he can want with a hogshead of gin is more than I can conceive."

"He said it was for a shipping order," growled Mr. Butt, looking down and twirling the brim of his hat.

"That may be," observed Mr. Bluff, "but I don't understand his taking liberties with my name; and so if you will have the kindness to amuse yourself with the papers for a few minutes, I will send for him directly, and we will have the matter explained."

"Well, that's very fair," replied Mr. Butt, "face to face — nothing like that; come to an understanding then. Hang me if I like the looks o't, though. Howsomever, as I a'n't dined, I'll just go and get a chop close by, and be back as soon as your man."

The moment the gin-seller had left him, Mr. Bluff despatched a messenger to desire Mr. Peter Snook to come to him directly, as he wished to speak to him upon particular business. He then went forward, looked at the said Peter's account, and saw that it was already overdrawn to the amount he had granted. He then observed the two clerks yet whispering mysteriously, and in a gruff tone asked them what they were laying their heads together about. The subject under discussion was soon explained.

"There's scarcely anything in the shop but dummies," said the junior clerk.

"Dummies! — what are they?" asked the banker.

"Parcels made up of pasteboard and paper and string, and empty boxes corded, to look like goods," replied the *ci-devant* shopman.

Hereupon Mr. Bluff began to look blue, but

terminated the conversation by observing that he had sent for Snook about some other business, and should take the opportunity to ask him a few questions concerning the said dummies.

Now the messenger employed on this occasion was a simple, honest, raw countryman, whose occupation about the banking-house was taking down and putting up the shutters, and running on errands; and the quickness with which he executed the latter of his functions was a subject of pride to himself and satisfaction to his employers.

“Measter Snook beant at whoam,” cried this Wiltshire Mercury, as he came puffing and blowing into the banker’s private counting-house.

“Whom did you see?” asked Mr. Bluff.

“I zeed a little man wi’ a hooked noaze,” was the reply; “and a zed as how the measter war gone to zum pleace as I can’t remember

the neam on, and wouldn't be back till to-morrow."

"Well, go again there," said Mr. Bluff, "and bring the little man with a hooked nose back with you."

"Ees, zur," replied the runner of errands, making his exit.

When Ephraim Hobson was summoned to appear before the redoubted banker, he objected to go immediately, because he had been in such a bustle all the morning as not to have found time to shave himself; but he declared that he would do that "in a jiffy," and step down directly after. The messenger, however, stuck to his point, and declared that he should go with him according to orders, if he was obliged to lug him along by the collar. Ephraim therefore called old Molly to take care of the shop during his absence, and trotted off with the countryman, wondering much what Mr. Bluff could want with him.

“Here be t’ little man wi’ the hooked noaze, zur,” exclaimed the Wiltshireman, on their arrival.

“Show him in,” said the banker, and Ephraim was shown in accordingly. “Are you Mr. Snook’s head shopman?” inquired Mr. Bluff.

“Yes, sir,” replied Ephraim, “head and tail too, for the matter of that, for he keeps but one; but I hope before long we shall want another hand or two.”

“Where’s your master?” asked the banker.

“Why, he’s gone to —— a little way down the river, sir,” said Ephraim, hesitating, for fear of letting out the secret of the whacking shipping order; “but he’ll be back before to-morrow morning, sir.”

“To-morrow!” exclaimed Mr. Bluff, frowning. “Harkye, sir, have you brought any money with you?”

“ No, sir, I had none to bring,” was the reply.

“ Humph !” said the banker, “ that’s very strange ! But I’ll tell you how it is, my good fellow,” he continued, with assumed complacency ; “ your master has made a small mistake in his account, I suppose ; but as he is generally very regular, I should be sorry to injure his credit for the sake of a trifle, so go home and bring me all you can muster, and we’ll try if we can’t manage matters.”

“ Lor’ bless ye, sir ! I’ve nothing to bring,” exclaimed Ephraim.

“ Nonsense ! man,” cried Mr. Bluff, “ you must have taken something in the course of the day !”

“ Why, you see, sir,” replied the perplexed shopman, “ you see, sir, just at this season of the year all our customers are out of town, and so things are very flat. There’s nothing stir-

ring: one has nothing to do but knock one's heels against the counter.'"

"Do you mean to tell me that you have taken nothing the whole day?" exclaimed the banker.

"Well, sir," replied Ephraim, "if I must tell you the truth, all I've taken this whole morning is four shillings and seven-pence, and I gave old Molly three and sixpence out o' that to pay for a leg of mutton: I never see such a day before, and I hope I never shall agin!"

"Hark'ee, sir," said Mr. Bluff, in a severe tone, "do you know that your account is already overdrawn, and yet your master has had the audacity to draw a check for upwards of three hundred pounds upon us?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ephraim, "for Pester and Co.'s bill; master drew it last night, and said he'd spoke to you about it, and set all right, just before he went away with the goods."

“What goods?” cried the enraged banker.

“La! I forgot,” exclaimed Hobson; “I wasn’t to tell anybody. But I hope you won’t let the cat out of the bag, as it an’t in your line, you know, sir.”

“Tell me instantly what goods you allude to!” said Mr. Bluff.

“Why, all the goods in the shop pretty nigh,” replied Ephraim; “master’s taken them with him in a ship for a thumping wholesale order that he got of the captain and owner of the—no, I musn’t tell the name of the ship.”

Here the banker was in a violent rage; but, being a politic man, he contrived to smother his indignation with the hope that he might yet make the shopman useful in recovering some part of the hundred pounds which he had advanced. He therefore observed gravely that they had no time to spare to talk about orders. “But,” he continued, “if you’ve a mind to

save your master's credit and not to see his bill returned, you must look sharp about you, and try and borrow at least a hundred pounds; I should think, among his connexions in business, there can be no great difficulty in raising such a trifle for a few days."

"I don't know," said Ephraim; "master told me he'd settled all with you, sir."

"He's made a mistake, I tell you, in his account," observed Mr. Bluff; "I agreed to let him overdraw, but not for so much. So go and see what you can do, and then I'll see how we can manage about the rest. If you cannot raise a hundred, I'm afraid his check must go back; but get all you can, and bring it to me."

The poor fellow promised to exert himself to the utmost, and, on leaving the bank, immediately began an unsuccessful round of applications for the requisite assistance.

No one could be more unfit for the task of

borrowing than honest Ephraim, who had never had the smallest experience in the art and mystery of "raising the wind." He called upon the various wholesale houses with which his master did business, and bluntly told his tale. "The bill will be returned to a certainty," said he, "if I can't borrow a hundred pounds of somebody; Mr. Bluff says he won't pay the check else. I'm sure I don't know what I shall do, nor where I shall go next."

As refusals multiplied, his anxiety increased, so that at length the wild agitation of his manners and appearance excited very disagreeable sensations in the minds of those who had Peter Snook upon their books, and more particularly those whom he had "favoured with a call, when in a buying humour," on the preceding day.

We must now return to the shop, in the middle of which sat old Molly engaged with her needle, her usual occupation of an after-

noon, it being her custom to get all the household work done in the morning, and to dress herself neatly immediately after dinner. So she cut a very respectable figure, though she was not exactly the sort of person one would expect to find in whole and sole possession of a retail linendraper's shop.

Now it so happened, that Mr. Jobb, of the firm of Jobb, Flashbill, and Co., was passing along Bishopsgate Street shortly after Ephraim had been carried off by the banker's messenger, and he very naturally looked about him for the name of Peter Snook. "Humph!" said he, when it caught his eye, "not much show in the windows; a snug family-trade, I suppose. Well, perhaps that's quite as well in these times; and yet, in a thoroughfare like this, I should have expected to see a little more dash. However, as I am here, I'll just give him a call, and say I hope he has not experi-

enced any inconvenience from his accident, and hear what he thinks of the goods I sold him yesterday : nothing like a little attention to a new customer—strike the iron while it is hot !”

At the termination of this soliloquy he entered Peter’s door, and his practised eye, acting as sentinel, instantly raised an alarm within him, which was quickly visible in his appearance. “ Is this,” said he — “ is this — isn’t there another Mr. Snook, a linendraper, living in this street ?”

“ No,” replied old Molly ; “ there an’t nobody of the name but master, and he an’t at home.”

“ It’s Mr. Peter Snook I’m inquiring for,” said Mr. Jobb.

“ Ay, ay, to be sure,” answered Molly. “ Peter ; that’s his christian name sure enough, but he an’t at home.”

“ Humph ! do you expect him in presently ?” inquired the wholesale dealer.

“ I ’m sure I don’t know when he’ll come back,” said Molly ; “ he came home yesterday morning, and went away again last night, in two hackney-coaches, him and Ephrum, and took with ’em a moit of goods I don’t know where.”

During this unsatisfactory speech, Mr. Jobb glided along the counter till he came in contact with the old boxes which Ephraim had ornamented with strong cords for the occasion. As he pushed against them, and his worst fears were confirmed by ascertaining that they likewise were “ dummies,” he could not suppress a groan.

“ La ! sir, an’t you well ?” inquired the old woman.

“ Why no — not exactly,” replied Mr. Jobb ; “ but when do you expect your master back ? Isn’t there anybody in the house but you ?”

“ It’s the hot weather, sir,” said Molly.
“ Sit down, do, sir ; you ’ll be better presently.

I'll go and get you a glass of water ;" and she went into the small back-parlour for that purpose. " There, sir, take a little of that," she resumed, on her return ; " it's only the hot weather. I haven't been myself for the last three or four days : and then I was kept up till I don't know what time this morning by our shopman, who came home as drunk as a hog. To be sure master treated him, that's one thing to be said ; I can't think how master could do so. And then, as they were together all the time, he must have been pretty near as bad as himself. How do you find yourself now, sir ?—better, an't you ?"

" A little," groaned Mr. Jobb ; " but pray is Mr. Snook in the habit of—of spending his evenings out ?"

" Why no," replied Molly ; " there wasn't a more quiet, pains-taking, stay-at-home man anywhere, for a single gentleman—no, not

nowhere, till he took to keeping company with that Miss Bodkin, and ever since then there's been nothing but junketing, and jaunting, and going to Margate, and I don't know what else. Some say he'll marry her; but if she comes into this house I'll go out of it, that's what I will — I'll not have such as she for my mistress."

As Mr. Jobb put the worst construction on all he heard, this derespectful mention of the fair Clarinda added not a little to the gloomy aspect of things. "A drunkard! a fellow that keeps a mistress, and takes her to Margate!" thought he: "a pretty sort of customer this that our clerk has picked up!"

"But, my good woman," said he, "didn't you say something about a shopman?"

"Yes," replied Molly, "Hephrum — Hephrum Obson: I don't know what'd become of the shop while master was gone a gallivanting, if it hadn't been for he."

“ And where is he now ? ” inquired Mr. Jobb.

“ Oh ! he ’ll be in presently,” was the reply ; “ he ’s only just run down to the bankers, and so left me to take care of the shop, and see as nobody pays twice, as they say.”

At the mention of the bankers, a faint gleam of forlorn hope appeared for a moment to the uneasy creditor ; but it vanished when he glanced again at the too plain-speaking “ dum-mies.” However, as the master was not to be seen, he determined to wait the return of the man, and obtain, if possible, some account of the goods which he had sold with so much glee on the preceding day.

“ Hephrum ’s sure to be back agin pretty near directly, sir,” said Molly ; “ but if it ’s anything as you want particular, if you ’ll leave word with me, he ’ll be sure to bring it to you directly himself. We had an errand-boy, but

whether master's turned him off or taken him with him I don't know, but I ha'n't seen him this two days."

As Mr. Jobb was not in a talking mood, the old body had all the chat to herself, and for half an hour continued to speak of her master and his affairs, interrupting her series of communications at intervals by the kind inquiry, "How do you find yourself now, sir?—better, eh?"

"I can't possibly wait much longer," said the wholesale dealer, looking at his watch; "are you sure he will be in presently?"

"Why," replied Molly, "one can't be sure of nothing in this world, except death and the poor-rates, as they say; but Hephrum said as he should be back directly. Howsomever, I shouldn't wonder if he an't gone to get a pint of porter, for he's been terrible thirsty all the morning because of last night's doings."

Everything that she said appeared to her auditor to throw additional disreputability on the already too suspicious "concern." She entertained him with an account of having found her master's pea-green coat, which he had "bran new" when he went to Margate, in such a state as no christian's coat was ever seen in before. "But," she added, "he's got another new un. Two new coats in little better than a week!—he doesn't think nothing of money now, since he's taken up with that Miss Bodkin."

Mr. Jobb's time and patience were at length exhausted, and he told his old entertainer to say that he would call again in an hour, and to desire the shopman not to be out of the way, as he wished to speak to him on particular business.

"What name shall I say?" asked Molly.

"Oh! that is of no consequence," replied

Mr. Jobb, fearing that the mention of his own was not likely to procure him an interview, under existing circumstances; "but," he added, "you may say that I called to pay some money."

"Very well, sir," said Molly; "it couldn't come more welcome, I'm sure, for Hephrum told me as he'd taken only four shillings and some halfpence, and he gave me three and sixpence out o' that to pay the butcher."

With this comfortless assurance respecting the condition of his new customer's finances, Mr. Jobb repaired to the house of Messrs. Pester and Co., to whom Peter had referred him for his character as a tradesman.

"We have done business with him for some years," observed Mr. Pester, who was a thin, tallish, sharp-nosed old gentleman, with a pair of small bright eyes deeply sunk in his head. "But why do you inquire again, my good

sir?" he continued; "your clerk was here yesterday morning on the same errand. He saw our ledger—You showed it him, didn't you, Mr. Driver?"

"Yes," replied another thin, tallish, sharp-looking, elderly man, who was busily engaged at his desk; "that's the way I always do—never answer questions, perhaps commit oneself; black and white speaks for itself. Would you like to see his account yourself, sir?"

"Why, humph!" said Mr. Jobb—"you are very obliging; if it's not giving you too much trouble, I really should, for there is something very extraordinary——"

"There it is, sir," said Mr. Driver, throwing open a huge book, and exhibiting the name of Peter Snook, written in a bold, masterly style at the top of a page containing a long list of the amounts of sales and payments.

Mr. Jobb examined the various dates, and under other circumstances would have felt perfectly satisfied ; but the dummies and the talkative old woman were yet present to his mind's eye and ear, and he remembered too well what had been said of the change in Peter's habits since he had " taken up with that Miss Bodkin."

In the mean while Mr. Pester had consulted a smaller volume, in which he found that Snook's bill for three hundred and sixteen pounds seventeen shillings fell due on that very day ; and coupling this circumstance with Mr. Jobb's very particular inquiries, he began to fear that something was wrong. Mr. Jobb likewise had observed the date and mode of the last settlement of account, by a bill at two months, so he exclaimed—

" Yes, that's due to-day ; and if it's paid, I shall never trust to appearances again !"

“What do you mean by that?” asked Mr. Pester.

“Why, if he does pay it,” said Mr. Jobb, “he must have pawned the goods I sold him yesterday, and all the rest of his stock, to raise the money, for I don’t think there’s twenty pounds worth in his shop.”

“How?—what?—eh?” exclaimed Messrs. Pester and Driver, both electrified at the same time; and forthwith Mr. Jobb related the particulars of his *tête-à-tête* with old Molly.

“This must be looked into directly,” said Mr. Pester; “I’ll go to our banker’s, and see if the bill’s paid or not: they must know by this time, as it’s pretty near five.” Accordingly, as Mr. Jobb volunteered to accompany him, the two creditors started off together.

While these things were passing, the unpolished dealer in gin had paid another visit to the banker, just after Ephraim Hobson had

set out on his borrowing expedition. Mr. Bluff recommended him to suspend his judgment till Peter's return ; but Mr. Butt was very angry, and, after bestowing various ill names on the said Peter, took an abrupt leave of the banker, not without again hinting at the responsibility incurred by the clerk's favourable account on the preceding day. He then repaired to the house of a friend of his who was a publican, for the purpose of taking a glass of brandy and water, and likewise to talk over the affair that was uppermost in his mind.

“ It looks bad,” said his friend, when he had heard the story ; “ but I'll tell you what I would do, if I were you. You've got a wife, you know.”

“ Yes,” said Mr. Butt, “ I have.”

“ Well,” continued the publican, “ she wears gowns and so on, and you wear shirts ; and this chap keeps a linendraper's shop : so sup-

pose you and I were to go there, and take my old woman with us to see as we a'n't cheated. I don't mind about taking a bit of Irish myself, for the matter of that; and if so be it turns out a bad job, all you get 'll be so much saved out of the fire: and if all 's right, why, you know, it 'll seem but a friendly sort of thing for you to give your new customer a turn."

"Egad! that's a bright thought of your's, Tom," said Mr. Butt; "you've got a head, lad! and 'store's no sore,' they say, let things turn up as they may. So go and brush up your old woman, and let us be off at once."

But the old woman in question happened to be out, and, as they were obliged to wait for her return, the two spirit-dealers employed the interval as men of their stamp are wont when they visit each other. The consequence was, that when the time for moving arrived, they

both talked louder, and perhaps a trifle more coarsely than usual.

When they entered the shop, old Molly was still sitting where Ephraim and Mr. Jobb had left her, but not quite so much at ease, for she began to feel anxious about the protracted absence of the former, and tormented herself by thinking what she should do if he came back in the same state as on the preceding night.

“ Well, mother,” said Mr. Butt, “ nobody at home but you !—eh ? We wants to look at some o’ your things.”

Now, though Molly did not approve of this mode of address, she was enough of a shopwoman to know that it was not usual to criticise the style of a customer’s language, so she replied that the shopman would be back directly, as he was only just gone down to the banker’s, and begged the gentlemen and lady to sit down and rest themselves till he came in.

After sitting till they were tired of gaping and doing nothing, the two gentlemen cast their eyes upon the public-house opposite, and resolved to adjourn there, first telling the old woman to send the shopman over directly he arrived, as they wanted to buy a good many articles, and had no time to lose.

It was between five and six when poor Ephraim came in, heated and harassed both in body and mind, to an excess which he had never before experienced. He had just discretion enough left to conceal what had happened from the talkative old woman. "If master brings back money enough to-morrow to pay the bill," thought he, "nobody but Pester's people and the banker's will know anything about it, as I shall take care to be in the way, and answer everybody that comes."

When told that there were three customers waiting, he, however, immediately crossed over

to tender his services, though he moved not with his usual alacrity ; but when they returned with him, and began to buy largely from the small remaining stock, he felt his spirit somewhat revived, and indulged the idea that they would pay ready money as they were strangers, and so enable him to take something to Mr. Bluff, and perhaps even yet prevent the bill from being dishonoured. Such were his last hopes, when they were all put an end to by a sudden change in the scene.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I SAY, mind as you sarves us well, young man,” cried Mr. Butt : “ I was recommended here in a very perticklar manner ; so you must put in them things as mistress is buying at ready-money price, as they’ll be paid for afore they goes out of the shop.”

This assurance was very cheering to poor Ephraim, and caused him to be even more than usually eloquent in praise of the few articles which he was able to produce on the counter.

In the mean while old Molly, being relieved from her responsibility, had stationed herself at the door for the purpose of looking about

her a bit, and taking a mouthful of fresh air, and in so doing, she caught sight of Mr. Jobb at some distance. "Ah! Hephrum," she cried, "here comes the gentleman as called before, and wants to pay some money."

"That 's your sort!" thought Hobson, "it never rains but it pours, they say. One should never give up."

"Well, sir," said Molly to Mr. Jobb, as he entered, "how do you find yourself now? — better, eh?"

"Oh! he 's come back, is he?" observed the creditor, and, without replying to the old woman's kind inquiry, he advanced to the counter, and saluted Ephraim by asking, in a dry, ungracious tone — "Are you the person who was with Mr. Snook last night at Queenhithe?"

Hobson saw by the stranger's manner that there was something wrong, and felt apprehensive that he might have unconsciously been

guilty of some foolish act while in his cups ; so he stammered, " Ye — yes, sir, I went there with master, and——"

" Oh ! you did, did you ?" said Mr. Jobb, biting his lips ; " we must have a little talk together on that subject, young man."

" Come, make us out a bill, will ye," cried Mr. Butt, fearing that the crisis would arrive before the purchase was complete. " There, put in that piece of thingummy as mistress is looking at, and be quick, as we 're in a hurry."

" Certainly, sir," said Ephraim, for Mr. Jobb had returned to the door, and appeared to be waiting for some one.

The invoice was duly made out, and handed to the gin-seller, who observed that he would run it over and see that the casting was right, while the goods were being packed up. So Ephraim set to work with paper and string, and had nearly accomplished his task when Mr. Jobb advanced from his outpost, accompa-

nied by Mr. Bluff, Mr. Pester, and a stranger dressed in black. These three came forward together, and behind them were to be seen two other individuals, not quite so well clad as those whom they followed.

“What ! Master Butt,” exclaimed the banker, “you are here before us, eh ?”

“Why, yes,” replied the spirit-dealer, “you see as I wanted a thing or two in this here gemman’s line, and so, says I, one good turn desarves another, and so why not buy ’em of he, eh? You see I beant very fōnd of what you call suspending one’s judgment, eh, banker ?” —and with a triumphant grin he put the invoice which Ephraim had given him into his pocket-book, and then, turning to his two friends, said, “Come, Snaggs, you and I can contrive to carry that ’ere parcel betwixt us as far as your house.”

“I insist upon it that no goods shall be taken out of the shop !” exclaimed Mr. Pester.

“Oho! you do, do you?” said Mr. Butt, “But I insists as they shall.”

“I can’t let ’em go without the money!” cried Ephraim, laying hold of one end of the huge parcel, as the purchaser seized the other.

“I insists on having ’em,” roared Mr. Butt. “They was bought, in the reg’lar way, cross the counter, and I’ve got the bill of parcels, all right, in my pocket.”

Hereupon a sort of struggle commenced, during which Mr. Jobb shut the door of the shop, and Mr. Snap, the gentleman in black, who was a lawyer, whispered a few words with the banker, and then interfered to preserve the peace.

“My dear sir,” said he to Mr. Pester, “you may as well let the goods go. It’s a question not worth arguing *now*. We can settle that at any time, as Mr. Butt is perfectly responsible.”

“Come, Snaggs,” cried the gin-seller, “you lay hold o’ one end, and I o’ t’other, and let’s be off.”

“Gently, my good sir,” said the banker; “Don’t be in such a hurry. As Mr. Snap justly observes, we can settle that question afterward: but time is too precious now to be wasted. We are come here to arrange matters for the recovery of the whole property carried off; and, as you are a creditor, we shall be glad to have your opinion and advice. So come, gentlemen, let us go to work; and, in the first place, let us hear what this young man has got to say for himself.”

“*He* a creditor!” thought Hobson: “Why — what in the world can master have bought of *him*? Humph! and what I’ve got to say for myself! What harm have I done, I should like to know?”

“Why, look ye, master banker,” replied Mr.

Butt, "I ha'n't no objection to lend a hand in this here business, provided as how I a'n't bamboozled at first going off; but the goods as I bought 's mine, and so, *nolus bolus*, I'll not give them up anyhow, for possession 's nine pints in the law — I knows that."

Mr. Snap again suggested that there could be no objection to the gentleman's taking the goods, as the validity of the sale might be discussed at a future period; so, after a little hesitation on the part of Messrs. Pester and Jobb, Mr. Butt had the satisfaction of seeing his purchase put into a hackney coach, under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Snaggs, who promised to keep it in safe custody, at "The Cat and Trumpet," till called for.

The creditors then adjourned to Peter's little back parlour, where Mr. Pester, by right of seniority, took the chair; and, forthwith, Ephraim Hobson was summoned to give an

account of what he knew concerning the flight of his master and the stock.

As he stood before this self-constituted court of inquiry, he was supported on either side by the two indifferently dressed followers, who proved to be sheriffs' officers.

"Now, Hobson," said Mr. Pester, "before I ask you any questions, it is but fair to inform you that you stand in a very ticklish situation, and much depends on your giving us, without hesitation or circumlocution, a clear and distinct account of all that you know of this extraordinary business, as well as of the part you took in it, and what induced you so to act."

"Why, for the matter o' that," replied Ephraim boldly, "I ha'n't done nothing that I need be ashamed on, except that I drank too much last night, in wishing master good luck and a pleasant voyage."

"What!" cried Mr. Pester, "do you call

it no harm to assist him in packing up all the goods in his shop, and taking them off to defraud his creditors?"

"And what have you to say for yourself about running all over the city to-day, and trying to borrow money in his name?" asked Mr. Jobb; who then turned to the other creditors, and added, "I suppose he meant to follow his master."

"Come sir," said Mr. Pester, "tell us at once where your master is gone, by what ship, and where bound. If you don't, it will go hard with you, depend upon it."

"Why, as for that, sir," replied Ephraim, "I'm not afeard, and maybe there mightn't be no great harm in telling you now; but master said as I was to be perticklar in not mentioning his whacking order, so as it mightn't come to the ears of any of your great wholesale houses, as might step in and chouse him out of it;

and, perhaps, that's what you're after now—I shouldn't wonder."

"It's not worth while to lose time in talking to the fellow here," observed Mr. Bluff; "let us take him to the Mansion House at once. I wrote a note to the Lord Mayor before I came out, and all is ready by this time, I dare say. He'll be glad enough to speak out there—if not, off he goes to prison at once."

The name of a prison made Ephraim turn pale. A committal, he felt, would be the ruin of his character; and, moreover, as examinations at the Mansion House were inserted in the papers, his master's credit would also be destroyed. "If you will but wait till to-morrow, sir," said he, "Mr. Snook will be back, with money enough to pay your bill, and everybody else as he owes a farthing to. You may depend upon that."

"Ay, suspend one's judgment, eh, banker?"

said Mr. Butt, pushing his elbow and winking at his neighbour. "The chap 'll have got clean off by then, if he ha'n't already."

"Tell us at once," exclaimed Mr. Pester, sternly, "tell us at once, by what conveyance your master went, -and where he is gone to. I 'll give you five minutes and no more" (here he laid his watch on the table). "If you do not answer in a satisfactory way by that time, we shall take you off as a prisoner."

Ephraim endeavoured to reflect till the time was expired, and then said. "I don't know, sir; but I'll tell you all I do know. It was a long boat, with a deck to it, and they talked about shooting the bridge, and master said as they was going to—to—to Gravesend, where he was to meet the captain and owner, as was to look at the goods, and to give him bankers' acceptances, and he was to be back with what wasn't sold to-morrow morning. There, now I 've told you all."

“Humph!” said Mr. Pester, “So he took *all* the goods with him in the same boat, eh?”

“Yes,” answered the shopman, “Leastways I understood they was all put into the hole; but I didn’t see ’em, because I only went into what they called the cabin.”

“And pray, sir, at what hour did the boat go away?” asked Mr. Pester, “and which way did she go?”

“I’m sure I can’t answer for that,” replied Hobson, “for master would have another bowl of punch, and it got into my head, and the last thing I recollect was, that old Nick took me up, and carried me away across the plank.”

“Ay, ay, he’ll carry you away somewhere else some o’ these days!” cried Mr. Butt, laughing at his own wit. “So your master’s gone with old Nick is he? Come, that’s all as’t should be anyhow.”

Here Mr. Driver, Mr. Pester's partner, made his appearance, and stated that he had been down to make inquiries at Queenhithe, and had discovered that the barge which took Peter and the goods, was called the Flitter, and that it left to go down the river about one o'clock in the morning. "It was hired," he continued, "of Heavaside the lighterman, for a trip to Gravesend, and three of his men went with her. "I've got a description of her here, in black and white; and from what the watermen say, there's no danger of missing her, as she is very remarkable in her appearance, and the heaviest sailer on the river.

Upon this information the creditors soon resolved upon a pursuit. Mr. Jobb volunteered to go by land to Gravesend, and Mr. Pester, with Mr. Butt, were to take a twelve-oared barge, and scour the river.

When Ephraim Hobson heard of this deci-

sion, he reflected that, as matters had taken such a turn, the sooner his master was found, the sooner this disgraceful hue and cry would terminate. He therefore, let out his last secret, by informing the gentlemen that the name of the ship for which the goods were destined was "The Deluder," but he could not tell for what port she was bound.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when Messrs. Pester and Butt embarked at the Tower, and a formidable appearance they made, in a long-boat, with twelve stout watermen and a coxswain.

"Lor' bless you, gemmen," said the latter, "why we should be sure to overtake her if she'd been gone double the time. I knows her well enough — a red and yellow stripe all round her, to make her look like summut, but she's no go in her. I never see such a washer-woman's consarn in all my born days. But

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she's a good sarvent to master Heaviside, I look upon 't, as she always takes a week about what any other craft would do in three days. But you gemmen ashore arn't up to them things. A precious sight o' money you pays them ladders as lays about tiding it! Why, it's pretty near half tide sometimes afore some on 'em gets under-weigh, and when they do, Lor' help us! one can't hardly tell which way they are going."

"But it's very strange we can't hear anything of the ship," observed Mr. Pester; "I've looked through the list of all that have cleared out for this week, and can't find the name."

"Why it does seem rummish," said the steersman—"I can't say as I remember the name at all; but if she was in the river last night, she's safe enough, for the wind's due east, and not a thing can stir. Howsomever, sir, we'll pull up to everything we can't exactly make out."

In pursuance of this plan, the jolly waterman and his companions, who were all engaged by the hour, continued during the night to cross the river from side to side, hailing every strange ship, and sometimes those which had friends on board, and asking divers questions concerning what vessels had gone down and what were expected, and so forth, concluding with inquiries for *The Deluder*. But even that question was omitted after their passengers were asleep, as the conscientious helmsman felt assured that she must be somewhere in the river, and if they should happen to stumble upon her, there would be nothing left to do next day on their way back, when they could take advantage of the light to reconnoitre with greater precision. Moreover, he was much pleased with Mr. Butt's manners and condescension, and in no hurry to part company; for that gentleman, finding nothing to his mind

in Mr. Pester's conversation, had transferred his attentions to "the captain," whom he invited to partake of the contents of a huge stone jar that stood between his legs, and which he had furnished himself with from his friend Snaggs, at the Cat and Trumpet.

In spite, however, of all this zig-zag work, the morning was not far advanced ere they found themselves approaching Gravesend, and then one of the men, who had been attentively watching a distant object, shouted, "That's her! I'll take my davy that's The Flitter!—I know her by that square red patch in her blanket."

"What's that?" cried Mr. Pester, staring about him as he awoke.

"The chace is in sight, sir," replied the helmsman; "I told you we should catch her. Ah! sir, you did right to engage our boat; she's one that will go—there's no stopping

her. Body o' me, but we've been flying all night! It an't every set of fellows that can stand such a tug; but they're all below-bridge boys, sir!"

Mr. Pester made no reply, but proceeded to wake his colleague, a task of no small difficulty, as he had laid himself down, and was snoring, well covered up, as soundly as if at home in bed. When once aroused, however, he was all activity, and seizing his formidable jug, handed "a morning cheerer," as he called it, to each of the men in the shape of a glass of brandy.

"That's the way to oil their jints, old gentleman!" said he to Mr. Pester: "come, suppose you and me were to do the likes, eh?"

"I am much obliged to you, sir," replied his companion, "but I must beg leave to decline; if I were to take anything so strong in the morning, I should be ill all day."

"Rabbit me, if that an't just what that

chap said as diddled me out o' the gin!" exclaimed Mr. Butt. "I thought the better of him for't at the time; but I'm blest if he an't put me out o' conceit of all your shy uns. Come, captain, you and me'll wet t'other eye, sha'n't us?"

" 'With all my heart,' as the man said," replied the waterman, wiping his mouth with his sleeve; "ay, sir, that's the stuff to keep a man's eyes open. Look, sir! do ye see that thing that they hists up to make believe it's a sail?—there, that like an old woman's petticoat hung up to dry, with a patch at the top. That's she, sure enough, and we'll be alongside on her in a brace o' shakes."

"Why she's going past Gravesend," observed Mr. Pester.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the steersman: "I suppose the ship as you wants lies lower down; but we'll catch the little un first, and then go

after t'other, if you're a mind. But, body o' me! what are they arter now? Why they've hauled a little skiff as they had astarn alongside!—and see! if there an't a parcel o' chaps getting into her, or I'm blest! What shall we do, sir?—shall we go arter the boat or the craft?"

"It won't do to let the rascal escape, if we can help it," said Mr. Pester; "but isn't there some danger of our not overtaking the barge afterwards?"

"It won't do at no rate to stand the chance of losing the goods for the sake of captivating a fellow whose hide's not worth tanning," observed Mr. Butt.

"No danger o' that, master," said the waterman, "so pull away, my lads! There, she's pushed off, and left nobody aboard as I see. Body o' me, if there an't four on 'em, and each takes an oar! How's that? didn't

you say as your man was a 'hind-the-counter chap?—he's not there then, I can tell you. Them covies knows what they're about, whoever they be; that is, if so be as they don't run that ere skiff under water. Blow me, how they go it! my eye, what whizzers! they do send her along precious!"

"I see you will never be able to overtake her before she reaches the land," said Mr. Pester, "so we had better give it up at once, and make for the barge, as, if they've all left her, something may happen to her, and that would be a serious affair."

"Just as you please, sir," replied the boatman, and immediately he changed his course, and steered for the barge.

It was a curious sight then to see the two creditors. Both were equally eager in the chace, and impatient to know the result; but their manner of exhibiting their anxiety was as

different as their persons. Mr. Pester's long, lean, upright body was terminated by a crane-like, stooping neck; so as he jerked himself, or was jerked forward, at every stroke of the oars, his long pointed nose being ever in advance, made him seem as though he had fairly caught scent of Peter and his goods, and was pecking at them by anticipation. Mr. Butt, on the contrary, sat with his arms a-kimbo, and the backs of his hands supported on his haunches, in all the majesty of rotundity, clad in a blue coat and scarlet waistcoat. His clothes, both small and great, appeared much too tight, as he held in his breath, for the purpose of sending it forth ever and anon in immense puffs, as though thereby to accelerate the speed of the boat. Mr. Pester was pale and silent: the gin-merchant was rubicund, and alternately emitting blasts, oaths, and ejaculations.

When they reached the barge, not a soul was to be seen on deck ; the tiller was made fast with a rope, the old, patched, square sail remained in its place, and she was moving in slow time with the tide.

One of the waterman jumped on board, shouting, "Barge, ahoy !" but no one answered to his cry.

"They've cut and run, sure enough," said the coxswain : "hang me, if I don't think we can claim salvage-money !"

"Help me up, will you ?" exclaimed Mr. Pester ; "let us see what they've left behind them."

"Hullo, there !—you, sir, below !" cried the man who first got on board ; "why don't you answer when you're hailed ?"

"I don't belong to the concern, my good man ; I'm only a passenger," replied a voice from the cabin.

“That’s he!” shouted Mr. Pester, scrambling out of the boat.

“Stop a moment! stop a moment!” cried Mr. Butt. “Why, bless my heart, if he an’t got legs like a spider—he’s up a’ready! Here, some of you chaps! give me a hand and a shove, will ye?”

“Ah! Mr. Pester, is it you?” said Peter Snook, when he saw his creditor at the door of the little cabin; “Glad to see you, sir! So you’ve been taking a trip out o’ town, and are going back with us? We shall get to Billingsgate between eight and nine, they say; and I hope it won’t be later, as I’ve a bill of yours comes due to-day, and I want to be at home in time to write a check for it.”

Mr. Pester was at first utterly confounded by this salutation, so extraordinary under existing circumstances. For a moment he fancied that there might be some truth in what Hob-

son had said of "the whacking order and the bankers' acceptances," and that Peter might have made a mistake of one day in calculating when the bill came due; but then the various transactions of the preceding day recurred to his mind, and, as he said afterward, he felt in such a passion at the fellow's effrontery, that he could not speak a word. Now Mr. Pester stood with his back to the cabin-door, the only place by which light was admitted, and moreover it was very customary with Peter to address people without looking in their faces, a habit which he had perhaps acquired by keeping his eyes upon the goods lying on the counter; so he observed nothing extraordinary in the appearance of the fresh passenger, who yet remained silent, when Mr. Butt showed himself in the rear.

"Oho!" cried he, looking into the little cabin, "that's the rascal, sure enough! So

we've catched ye at last, Master Can't-drink-of-a-morning, eh?"

"Who's the gentleman speaking to, I wonder?" inquired Peter.

"Who am I speaking to!" exclaimed Mr. Butt, "why you, you scoundrel. What ha' ye done with my hogshead o' gin? If you don't give it up, right and tight, I'll have it out o' your bones, that's what I will."

"La! Mr. Pester," said Peter, with a bewildered air, "what can the gentleman mean? I never had a hogshead of gin. What should I want with such a quantity? I never buy more than a gallon at a time, and that lasts me I don't know how long."

Mr. Pester had by this time recovered from his first fit of astonishment, and exclaimed indignantly, "Come, sir, let us have no more of this foolery! Where are the goods?"

“The goods?” asked Peter, staring, “What goods?”

“What goods!” exclaimed Mr. Pester, “why, the whole of your stock, that you told your shopman you’d got a large shipping order for.”

“I never told him any such thing,” cried Peter, looking frightened. “Do pray tell me, sir, what you mean. I hope nobody’s taken Ephraim in, during my absence! A large shipping order! why, it’s quite out of our line.”

“Is it, my fine fellow!” exclaimed the ginseller: “that’s a different tale to that you told me not longer ago than the day afore yesterday. But never mind, the rope’s spun as’ll give you a hist, or my name’s not Bill Butt.” He then turned to Mr. Pester, and added, “Don’t ye see what he’s arter, old un? He wants to bamboozle us here, and gain time while those other chaps that’s gone ashore

makes off with the booty. So, let's go at once, and see what there is aboard here, and make sure o' that, and then look arter the rest."

As this advice appeared too rational to be neglected, the two creditors left Peter Snook to his reflections, and betook themselves to the deck.

"That boat with two pair of oars, is making for us, it's my notion," said the head waterman.

"Never mind about no more boats than this as we're in!" cried Mr. Butt. "Come, my lads! lend a hand here to pull up these cellar doors."

"It's Jobb, I see," observed Mr. Pester, "I know him by his low-crowned hat."

"My eyes! if there an't the hogshead of gin!" shouted Mr. Butt, looking down the hatchway. "There it is, marked P. S. with a G below, just as he told me."

"If that's the mark you want to find,

there's a plenty o'things here as has got it, sir," said an active young fellow, who had jumped down into the hold. This was cheering intelligence for old Mr. Pester, who, after bending over the brink of the hold awhile, descended with some difficulty to explore its contents. He was soon joined by Mr. Jobb, and both were highly delighted at what they beheld. The number of bales, boxes, and trusses was prodigious: and all were marked ^{P. S.}_{G.}

"The fellow meant to do things in the wholesale way at any rate," observed Mr. Jobb.

"I think the creditors can't do less than vote us a piece of plate," said Mr. Pester. "Here are two bales of ducks, and three boxes of Irish, seemingly untouched, and — I wish it wasn't so dark up in this corner, but there's something here. Lor' have mercy upon us! Why it's a man! Who are you? What are you doing here? Hullo! Hullo there! Some of you come down, will you!"

“ A man !” exclaimed Mr. Jobb, “ It’s the scoundrel himself, I’ll be bound. Come out, you rascal !” he continued, taking out a pocket pistol ; “ come out, or I’ll shoot you at once !”

Hereupon there issued from behind the merchandise, a strange sort of growling noise, which, though it proved the dark corner to be inhabited by an animal of some kind, was not sufficiently characteristic to indicate its particular species. Mr. Pester forthwith made the best possible use of his long legs, and escaped out of the hold in much less time than he had taken in the descent. Mr. Jobb, more courageous, merely retreated into the light of the hatchway, keeping his eye and his pistol directed to the mysterious spot. He was soon reinforced by half a dozen of the watermen, and a light being procured, they all advanced warily to the attack. On their approach the same strange noise was repeated, and again Mr. Jobb threatened to fire ; and perhaps in

his agitation, might soon have pulled the trigger, had it not been for one of his assistants, who boldly advanced the light, and exclaimed, "Here's a man's leg at any rate!"

"Pull away then!" cried another, "The chap as it belongs to can't be far off."

Accordingly they pulled away, and drew forth a poor fellow, dressed like a sailor, with his hands and legs bound, and a gag in his mouth.

"What can be the meaning of this?" exclaimed Mr. Jobb.

"Perhaps he can tell us if we take that tit bit out of his chops," said a waterman; but when that operation was performed, the prisoner seemed either too much exhausted or too much frightened to gratify their curiosity immediately. So he was conveyed on deck for the benefit of the air, and after staring wildly round him for some time, and partaking of the

contents of Mr. Butt's huge stone jug, he at last recovered the use of his articulating faculties, and told his tale with as much precision as could be expected under existing circumstances. It appeared that he, with another man and a boy, all in the employ of Mr. Heavside, the lighterman, were put in charge of the Flitter, when she was hired by Mr. Peter Snook, for a trip to Gravesend. According to their orders they took the barge, in the first instance, to a wharf near Queenhithe, and assisted in loading her with a quantity of goods, which were brought down in carts, after which Mr. Snook himself came on board, bringing with him two very large strong black-looking men, and a little man with a hooked nose. In addition to these he had previously sent a tall, elderly person, whom he called Nick, to superintend the stowing away of the merchandize. The sailor then went on to relate how Mr.

Snook and Nick and the little gentleman had a sort of jollification in the cabin, till the latter was carried ashore by Nick, previously to their getting under weigh. They then proceeded down the river, and nothing particular occurred till they had passed Greenwich Hospital, when Mr. Snook ordered them to lay the barge alongside a large black-sided ship that was moored off the Isle of Dogs. This order was no sooner obeyed than they were boarded by a number of men from the said ship, who seized the narrator and his two messmates, bound them hand and foot, and put them down into the hold, telling them that no harm would come to them if they remained quiet; but, if they attempted to raise an alarm, they might look for the worst. From that time the poor fellow said that he had remained ignorant of what was going forward, and quite alone, till about a quarter of an hour before his release,

when Nick and three other men came down and gagged him, and he supposed had treated his messmates in the same way. Search was immediately made for the other prisoners, and they were soon found in different corners, and set at liberty, and their accounts tallied precisely with that of their companion.

“Why, this is reg’lar piracy!” cried the head waterman.

“Should think ’tis,” said Mr. Butt; “howsoever, I votes for sarving him with the same sauce as he give to these here men.”

“I hardly know whether we’re justified in taking the law into our own hands,” observed Mr. Pester, “but I must confess it would serve the fellow right.”

The question, however, was very speedily settled; for the two men and the boy, who had just been released, no sooner learnt that Peter Snook was yet in the cabin, than they pro-

ceeded to make him their prisoner; and the watermen lent their assistance, swearing that if any harm came of it, they would all "be tarred with the same stick." So Peter was dragged forth, looking, of course, more frightened than usual, and bound hand and foot, and then conveyed, not in the most delicate manner, to the hold. His struggles and protestations were vehement, but were alike unavailing, for Mr. Pester turned a deaf ear, Mr. Jobb smiled, and Mr. Butt held his sides to prevent himself from splitting with laughter.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING the Flitter's voyage to London, certain legal processes had been completed, by virtue of which a sheriff's officer stepped on board at the moment of her arrival, and took possession of the body of Peter Snook, which he forthwith conveyed to prison.

"You're not to let nobody have no communication with him on no pretext whatsoever," said he to the gaoler, on delivering up his charge: "that's Mr. Snap's perticklar orders."

"Very well," was the hoarse reply. And so the prisoner was conducted to a cell, and

left to his own reflections, which we shall not pretend to describe.

While he was thus employed, a hasty valuation was taken of the goods recovered, and his books underwent a rigid scrutiny. The results of both were extremely satisfactory to the creditors in general, and to Messrs. Pester, Jobb, and Butt in particular, insomuch that they glorified themselves immensely upon the vigour and promptness of their proceedings.

In the mean while Ephraim Hobson and old Molly were in a deplorable state of anxiety. The shop was shut up, and the house was in the possession of an officer, so they had nothing to do but to wonder, and lament, and complain, and quarrel together ; and they did all by turns, agreeing, however, perfectly on one point, and that was, that if the master had done anything wrong, “ it must be all along of *that* Miss Bodkin.”

After a few days thus spent by the various parties, a meeting of the creditors was called, and Peter was brought from his place of confinement to make his appearance before them and say what he could for himself.

On his entrance every one was surprised at the altered expression of his countenance: instead of looking, as usual, as if he was frightened, he advanced with the angry air of an injured man.

“He’s plenty o’ brass, howsome’r,” observed Mr. Butt.

“Peter Snook,” said Mr. Pester solemnly from the chair, “that look does not become you after what has passed. Let me advise you to conduct yourself with propriety; you will find *that* the best policy, depend on it.”

“A pretty thing for *you* to talk of propriety!” exclaimed Peter; “*you* that see me laid hold on by a set of ruffians, and never said a

word nor give information a'terwards! And here have I been kept away from my business I don't know how long, and shut up, like a dog in a kennel; but I look upon't you were at the bottom of it all — you and that fellow with the plumpudding face, as blowed me up about a cask of gin! What you both mean by it I can't think; but if there's any law in the land, I'll make you remember it, both of you, that's what I will!"

At this extraordinary address to their president, the creditors stared with surprise.

"Really this beats anything I ever heard in my life!" observed Mr. Jobb; and then, elevating his voice, he continued — "Upon my word, Mr. Snook, you take a strange way of entering upon your defence. Pray, how is it that I escape so easily? If you remember, I was present likewise when you were taken."

"Yes, I recollect you now," said Peter;

“ you was there too, and more shame for you, to stand by and see a man used so, whoever you are.”

“ Whoever I am !” exclaimed Mr. Jobb, “ why you do not pretend to say you don’t know me !”

“ Not I !” replied Peter, “ how should I ?”

“ Why, this is monstrous !” cried Mr. Jobb ; “ the man’s mad, surely ! I suppose you’ll say next that you never came and looked out a parcel of goods at our house, Jobb, Flashbill, and Co.”

“ Jobb, Flashbill, and Co. !” exclaimed Peter — “ your clerk gave me a card on board the “ Rose in June ;” but as for doing anything with you, you know I never did : I never bought a ha’p’orth o’ goods o’ you in my life, and what you mean by insinuating that I did, I can’t think.”

“ Very pretty, indeed, this !” said Mr. Jobb,

looking round at the rest of the creditors.

“Come, gentlemen, it is somebody else’s turn now : I suppose we shall have it all round.”

“Pray, Master Snook, do you know *me*?” asked the banker.

“Yes, to be sure I do—Mr. Bluff,” replied Peter ; “how should I help it when I see you pretty near every day of my life?”

“Well, that’s something!” observed Mr. Bluff. “So come now, let us talk rationally—what have you done with the two hundred and seventy pounds that you drew out directly after I gave you leave to overdraw for a hundred?”

“Two hundred and seventy pounds!” exclaimed Peter — “I overdraw for a hundred ! —I never asked you to overdraw in my life ; and you’ve got upwards of a hundred and fifty pounds of mine in your hands now, and I don’t know how much more as Hobson has paid in since I’ve been gone.”

“ Hark ye, sir,” said Mr. Bluff, in a tone of severity, “ you are making a rod for your own back, by conducting yourself in this manner : what you mean by it I cannot conceive ; but you must pursue a very different method if you expect your creditors to act leniently towards you.”

“ My creditors !” cried Peter : “ I ’m not afraid to meet my creditors and look ’em in the face at any time ; but you are no creditor of mine, anyhow. I never was beholden to you for a farthing, unless it was now and then discounting a bill or so ; and Mr. Jobb is no creditor of mine, no more than that other man that talks about a cask of gin. I owe Mr. Pester a good deal, I know ; but he ’s no need to be afeard of his money ; and if so be his bill ’s returned, why, it ’s his own fault, for letting me be seized upon by a set of rufians, nobody knows why nor wherefore, when

I was coming to town a purpose to provide for it."

He then proceeded to designate several gentlemen sitting at the table as being no creditors of his, although they were of the number of those from whom large purchases had been made for the "whacking" shipping order, and the goods they had furnished were among the rest of the cargo of "The Flitter."

Mr. Snap, the lawyer, now whispered something to Mr. Pester, in consequence of which the latter mildly requested Peter to withdraw for a short time while his case should be taken into consideration; so Peter was accordingly withdrawn by the sheriff's officers, muttering vengeance against all those who had used him so shamefully.

When he was gone, Mr. Snap rose, and spoke to the following purport:—"Gentlemen, the case of your debtor—for, really, as things

now appear, it would be wrong to call him an insolvent — the case and present situation of your debtor is one of a very singular nature, yet not altogether, I apprehend, without something very nearly tantamount to a parallel — hem! When men have committed crimes, and are discovered, and found out, and taken, under circumstances too clear, and distinct, and convincing, to leave them any chance of any other defence whereby to escape from justice, and the consequences of their crimes, misdeeds, and misdemeanours, then, Gentlemen, under such circumstances, they have been known to sham and affect lunacy. I do not mean to affirm that Peter Snook is not an insane person: indeed, I must say, that if he means to deceive, the line of conduct which he has pursued is extremely well chosen to perplex the question. You perceive that he acknowledges no one act that he has committed

since his return from Margate, or rather since the accident he met with in falling overboard; and if it be a case of deceit, it is evident that he means it to be inferred that that accident has disordered his intellects. Perhaps he may really be *non compos mentis*. I do not take upon me to decide: that is a question to be argued hereafter, and decided upon, principally according to the evidence of medical gentlemen. Waving that point, then, for the present, let us take a brief view of his conduct prior to the period of his zeal or affected insanity; and I think we shall come to a conclusion that he has long been preparing for this evasion or running away with all the goods and chattels he could collect, from his creditors. You have heard of his change of character, attributed by his servants, no doubt very justly, to his connexion with a certain female. Now, by an inspection of his books,

it clearly appears, that from the commencement of that unfortunate connexion he must have neglected his trade in a very extraordinary degree, as his purchases were, comparatively, nothing, and his sales must have been, of course, commensurate therewith."

The reader will perhaps recollect that the period referred to was that in which Peter had been said to have resolved on reducing the stock of linendrapery, in order to make room for "a haberdashery-side" to his shop.

"You will observe, gentlemen," continued Mr. Snap, "that this was during that time of the year when drapery goods are understood to be generally most in request. We now come to a later period, that is, to the season when so many persons leave the city to migrate to watering-places, and then, as you all know, the retail trade in particular is always extremely dull. Now, at this very time, in this very dull sea-

son, when his own shopman declares there was nothing doing, he suddenly made purchases which, with the exception of those of the other day, constitute by far the greatest proportion of his debts. His next step seems to have been to collect in all that was owing to him with extraordinary diligence, his shopman and himself being, as we have ascertained, indefatigably employed in that pursuit from morning till night previous to his going to Margate. Notwithstanding this, however, we find that he had not been in that dissipated place more than a day or two, before he called upon Mr. Coddle, a gentleman now present, and borrowed five-and-twenty pounds, for which that gentleman is now a creditor, as well as for a bale of ducks purchased at the same time, and for which, it appears, the buyer had no sort of occasion in the state of his stock and his trade."

"Ay, that's all true," said Mr. Coddle; "I

little thought my ducks would go sailing down the river and back again in such quick time, eh? Much obliged to Mr. Pester and Mr. Jobb, and that stout gentleman in the red waistcoat, I'm sure, eh? We ought all to be much obliged to 'em, eh?—oughtn't we, eh? Don't know where my ducks had been now else, eh?"

"Most likely gone to Amerikke," observed Mr. Butt; "that's where all the rubbish goes to now."

"Eh? what—eh?" exclaimed Mr. Coddle, somewhat indignant at this disrespectful mention of his ducks—"rubbish, eh? Let me tell you, sir, they was as prime an article as any in the market, eh? You know 'em, Jobb, don't you, eh?"

"Lord love ye, sir," said Mr. Butt, "I warn't talking agin your ducks, not I; I shouldn't know one on 'em from a tailor's goose if I see'd it. I means the rascal himself;

it was he as I called rubbish, and not you. But come, Mr. Lawyer, go on with your argufication; I likes to hear you talk. You comes the thing well, and does summut for your money, that I must say, though I've paid a pretty sight o' six and eight-pences to some o' your kidney for the Lord knows what! I'm sure I could never tell. Come, go on with your lingo, and pitch it into him again!"

"You will thus observe, gentlemen," resumed Mr. Snap—"you will perceive, by what I have said, that there is strong presumptive evidence to lead us to conclude that the whole was a scheme long since preconcerted. Was it likely that a decent tradesman would go to Margate without putting sufficient money in his pocket to pay his expenses for a few days? To be sure, there was a lady in the case; but then he knew she was there, and so we must conclude that he applied to Mr.

Coddle merely for the purpose of abusing that gentleman's confidence, and getting upon his books. With respect to the more recent and more important transactions, I shall merely remark that, if he is mad, there is much method in his madness; for you may observe that the greater part of his late purchases have been made from firms whose accounts with him were previously closed, and that now he declares them not to be among the number of his creditors. This circumstance, together with his denying his having asked Mr. Bluff to let him overdraw his account, affirming that he did not know Mr. Jobb, that he never gave Mr. Butt an order for gin, and so forth, are all in keeping with his character of real or assumed insanity, brought on suddenly by the fright consequent on his falling overboard from *The Rose* in June. That, it seems, is a real fact, being corroborated by one of Mr. Jobb's

clerks, and others who were in the vessel ; indeed, the steward of the ship is now in attendance to speak to the point, if required. His shopman and woman-servant are likewise here, in case any gentleman should wish to ask them any questions."

Here ended the lawyer's exposition of the case, and then the creditors, after a short consultation, agreed on the propriety of summoning Ephraim Hobson before them, for the purpose of hearing his account of recent transactions, and then confronting him with his master.

The poor fellow made his appearance in a very different mood from that which Peter had exhibited ; he was sadly downcast, humble, and respectful, and the particulars which he gave of his master's return and the subsequent packing, purchasing, cart-loading, and embarkation, were such as have been already related. When asked by a creditor how it was that his master, after doing so little busi-

ness in June and July, had made such heavy purchases in the dull month of August, he replied that it was "all along of that Miss Bodkin," who, he was sure, would be the ruin of him at last, before she had done with him.

"Well, Hobson," said Mr. Pester, "I suppose you can have no objection to repeat what you have said before your master's face?"

"Why no, sir," replied Ephraim, "I can't say as I should like exactly to do that, because he doesn't like to have Miss Bodkin thrown in his face; he's a bit ticklish on that point. To be sure, he did say t'other day as she might go to Jericho, so I suppose there's been a bit of a miff betwixt 'em; but I dare say it's made up agin, for if he has been doing anything wrong, I'm sure it's all along of her; for afore he took to keeping company with her there wasn't a master in Bishopsgate Street as stuck closer behind the counter."

"Well, well," said Mr. Pester, "then we'll

leave her out of the question: I allude only to your business transactions on the day of your master's return from Margate."

"No, sir, to be sure," replied Ephraim, "I can't have no objections to doing that. To be sure, he did tell me to keep the whacking shipping order a secret; and so I did, you know, till I found as his credit was like to suffer for 't."

When Peter was again brought in, he was not in the least changed in his demeanour, but looked as fiercely and angrily as before.

"Lor', master, I'm glad to see ye agin!" exclaimed Ephraim—"Who'd ha' thought as 't would ha' come to this?"

"Come to what?" cried Peter; "I'll make 'em repent of it, every man Jack of 'em, before I've done, if there's law to be had for love or money!"

"Ah! sir," said Ephraim, "we'd better ha'

stuck to the retail. I was afeard that shipping consarn wouldn't answer, and tell'd you so, if you recollect, but you wouldn't hearken to me."

"What shipping concern?" inquired Peter, with a look of amazement.

"La! master," exclaimed Ephraim, "it an't of any use to pretend to keep it a secret now, when everybody knows it; I didn't tell Mr. Pester, though, till the last, when all the goods was gone out o' the shop, and the sheriffs' officers had come to take possession o' the house."

"Sheriffs' officers in possession of my house!" roared Peter—"all the goods gone out of the shop! What do you mean by that, you rascal? what have you been doing in my absence?" And he sprang forward furiously, and seized the trembling shopman by the collar with a degree of violence which rendered it difficult for the two officers in attendance to disengage him from his hold.

“ He acts the part well, if it be only sham,” observed Mr. Snap, at the same time making signs to the officers to hold their prisoner fast.

This precaution was by no means unnecessary, for when Ephraim, at Mr. Pester’s request, repeated what he had before said relative to the shipping order and the manner of its execution, Peter Snook’s rage appeared to exceed all bounds. He struggled, swore, and made use of the most violent exclamations, declaring that it was all “ a pack of lies from the beginning to the end,” that all present were a set of conspirators who had laid their heads together to ruin him, that there never was such a rascally business on the face of the whole earth, and so forth. At length, just as Ephraim had concluded with the scene on board the barge at Queenhithe, he burst into a sort of hysterical laugh, and exclaimed, “ I drink a bowl of punch!—why you know I hate the

very name of it, ever since that night when I was so taken in at Vauxhall.—A likely story indeed! Oh, Ephraim Hobson! Ephraim Hobson! little did I expect this from you: but you'll rue this morning's work the longest day you have to live, that's what you will, you perjured villain!"

Now Ephraim was no lover of hard names, and, moreover, had only his character to depend upon; and it was also particularly desirable that that character should stand well with the wholesale houses, the principal partners of which he now saw before him; for, like most, if not all other shopmen, he indulged an idea of "setting up for himself" at some future day. So, when attacked on that sensitive point, he seemed suddenly to have lost sight of all respect and commiseration for his late master, whom he upbraided with denying his own actions, striving to cheat his creditors,

and endeavouring meanly to shelter himself, by taking away the character of an innocent man.

“Lookye, gentlemen,” said he, “I’m ready to take my bible oath of all that I’ve said; and if there’s a villain in the case, he knows pretty well who it is.”

“Nobody blames you, Hobson,” observed Mr. Pester; “situated as you were, most persons would have acted as you did. Only, another time, when you see all the goods of a retail shop taken away, to execute a single order, you will do well to mention the circumstance to one or two of the principal creditors.”

Then turning to his colleagues, he inquired if any of them had any farther questions to put to the parties before them.

A gentleman replied, that he wished to say a word to the shopman after the master had withdrawn; so Peter was again conducted forth, vowing vengeance as before, from the presence of his creditors.

“Pray, young man,” asked the citizen, “have you ever, at any previous time, observed anything particular in Mr. Snook’s conduct? Is he generally pretty much the same? Hasn’t he, sometimes, occasional fits of flightiness?”

“Why yes, sir,” replied Ephraim; “he’s been flighty enough, for the matter o’ that, ever since he took to going arter that Miss Bodkin.”

“Oh! ah! hem!” said Mr. Snap, interfering, “I think, with your permission, my good sir, we had better not inquire farther on that head just now.”

The creditor acquiesced, and Ephraim took his leave. Mr. Snap then continued, “The scene which we have just witnessed, gentlemen, is a convincing proof of the line of conduct which Peter Snook means to adopt, if he be not really in a state of insanity. It seems to me, therefore, that we cannot do better than set about finding out and ascertaining the true

condition of his mind, whether it be sound or unsound."

"Certainly," observed Mr. Pester, and several others present: "we cannot do better. What steps shall we take?"

"Why," said Mr. Snap, with much solemnity, "the regular way is to obtain a commission 'de lunatico inquirendo,' that is——". Here there was a general start among the creditors. Some absolutely jumped up from their seats. Others thrust their hands into their pockets, as if to feel whether the money were not already oozing out.

"None o' your natico queer end-os," roared Mr. Butt: "if so be as the chap lost his wits by tumbling into the water, chuck him in again! Give him another ducking, and see if he can't find 'em agin!"

"Why, my dear sir," said Mr. Pester, "the expense of such a process, under so small an

estate, would eat up everything. There would not be a halfpenny in the pound, no, not a farthing."

"We should deserve to be called lunatics ourselves!" cried Mr. Jobb.

"Downright madmen," observed another.

"Who'd be the fools then, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Coddle. "Sent my ducks to a pretty market, then, eh? Made ducks and drakes of 'em, then, as they say, eh?"

All were unanimous and vociferous.

"Come, master lawyer," cried Mr. Butt; "you sees as that ere queer end o' the consarn won't fit; so just give a bit of a rummage in your knowledge-box, and try if you can't lug us out a taste o' summut more like the thing!"

"If we can ascertain the real state of the case in a more simple manner," said Mr. Snap, "I'm sure I should be the last man in the world to recommend or advise any step or pro-

ceeding that might tend to incur expense. Suppose, in the first place, we were to send a messenger to Moorfields with a note, requesting one of the professional gentlemen at Bedlam to favour us with his attendance, for the purpose of having some conversation with the unfortunate man."

This proposition was instantly agreed to *nem. con.*; and when the messenger was despatched, Mr. Snap said that he should like to make one more trial, by means of the steward of the Margate-hoy, whether Peter could not be brought to confess that he was in town on the morning in question. For this purpose the sailor was called, and instructed to enter the room where the prisoner was, and to accost him as though the meeting were accidental.

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the man, "I remember him well enough, and the fright as he put

us all in. I was mortal glad to see him come for his bundle next morning, as it'd been a precious deal out of our way if he hadn't, for the ladies are wery timoursome, and some o' the gentlemen too, for the matter o' that, and would never have set their foot aboard a wessel as a man had been drowned out on, if they knowed it, though it warn't no fault o' the wessel's, nor our'n neither."

On entering the room where Peter was sitting in company with the sheriff's officers, the steward went up, and, agreeable to his instructions, said—

"Ah! sir! I'm glad to see you safe and sound. I hope you haven't taken cold from your accident?"

"No," replied Peter, "I haven't,—but — let me see—I ought to know your face,—oh, the steward of 'The Rose in June.' I say, my good fellow, I wish you'd just look about

the ship, and see if you can't find never a brown paper parcel marked 'P. S.' It's got two pea-green superfine coats with velvet collars in it, one quite new and t' other a little stained with the salt water. I haven't been able to come down to look after 'em, or I should."

"La ! sir !" said the steward, "how can you say so ? when I gave them to you myself the morning arter, when you came on board the wessel and axed for 'em."

"What ! are you in the conspiracy too ?" cried Peter. "Get out of my sight, you rascal ! You shall catch it properly some of these days, as well as the rest, I promise ye."

The steward having often practised in those bloodless collisions so frequent on the Thames, and which are vulgarly called "jawing matches," immediately poured in a broadside of unmentionable names upon the luckless draper, and would have continued his fire much longer

but for the interference of one of the officers, who whispered in his ear—

“ You may as well shut up your potato-trap, my hearty ’un, for he ’s crazed, and just agoing to be sent to Bedlam.”

“ Whew !” whistled the sailor ; “ that makes some odds, sure enough.” And forthwith he retired, and went to make his report to the creditors in the following terms :—

“ Why, gentlemen, what ’s the use of sending a body to talk to a man like that ’ere ? He ’s as mad as a nor’-nor’-easter, and swears I newer give him the clothes, and that he hadn’t had time to come for ’em, when I ’ll take my oath that he come aboard the wessel next morning and took ’em away with him.”

“ Humph !” said Mr. Snap. “ Hem—ahem ! Well, my good fellow, that is what we shall trouble you to do, if you please.”

“ Do what ?” asked the sailor.

“Take your oath,” replied the lawyer. “Did not you say that you would take your oath you had delivered the clothes to him?”

“Why yes, sir,” answered the steward, looking rather sheepish and playing with his hat, “I did so, to be sure; but I’m not wery fond o’ taking my dawy, and when I comes to think of it, I’d rather not, if you please.”

“What can possibly be your objection, my good man?” asked Mr. Pester.

“Why, lookye, sir,” replied the sailor; “I hope no offence, but, if it were you I shouldn’t mind, because of your nose; nor more I should if it were that fat gentleman with the blue coat and red waistcoat; but bless you, we’ve such sights of little tallow-faced folks, as goes up and down with us ewery woyage, like him in t’other room, that there’s no knowing one from t’other. So I sha’n’t swear;—it’s no use. One might as well swear to the plate as

one ate one's wittols out on a week ago; they 're all so very much alike, you see."

As it was impossible to overcome this conscientious scruple, Mr. Snap forbore to press the point, and observed that his motive for asking for the steward's oath was merely because he must be considered as a disinterested witness, which none of the parties present could pretend to be, however respectable; and he added, that all persons were equal in the eye of the law, an axiom much more frequently repeated than credited. On the present occasion Mr. Butt appears to have been somewhat sceptical, as he "favoured the company" by singing, in no small voice—

" If rogues were hung of every degree,
Why, then we should have better company
On Tyburn tree."

"Come, gemmen," he continued, "I votes for going and getting a bit o' dinner while the

mad doctor's gauging the fellow's brains. Rum sort o' stock-taking that ! I wonder how he'll go about it. But every man to his trade. Where shall us dine ?”

The latter question was very soon decided, and the greater number of the creditors adjourned to a neighbouring tavern, where a substantial meal was set before them with that dispatch and propriety for which the city is so justly celebrated. That the company in general, and Messrs. Coddle and Butt in particular, did ample justice both to the cook and the landlord, followed as a matter of course ; and when the cloth was withdrawn, and they were taking their wine, the medical gentleman waited upon them to make his report :—

“ I confess myself to be much perplexed,” said he. “ The poor fellow is certainly just now in a state of very great excitement, and talks of a conspiracy against him, formed by a

number of individuals, some of whom he named, and I find to be persons of great respectability. This is no uncommon delusion among our unfortunate patients, and if I were to judge by this and other suspicious indications, I should pronounce him to be insane; but there are certain characteristics of insanity which I do not find in him, and therefore I cannot venture to commit myself by coming to a decision after a single visit. In particular, I wish to cross-question him concerning a strange story which he has been telling me, of the mode of his escape from drowning, after he fell overboard from 'The Rose in June.' I have noted the outlines particularly in my memory, and shall compare them with his next recapitulation. It is a strange and unlikely tale, to be sure; and if his general conversation was of that wild, imaginative, flighty kind which I have so often witnessed, I should say

it was purely ideal; but he appears such a plain-spoken, simple sort of person, that it is difficult to conceive how he could invent such a fiction."

The doctor then proceeded to relate the said tale to the company; but instead of quoting his words, which were a mere outline, we shall give it to the reader in our own way, with all the various particulars obtained from Peter's various recitations, in the same manner as his creditors were subsequently paid, that is, "by instalments."

CHAPTER VIII.

PETER SNOOK, in his frequent repetitions of the following tale to different persons, sometimes mentioned particular circumstances which at other times he omitted ; but it is worthy of remark, that he was never detected in the most trifling contradiction of himself, though often cross-questioned with much adroitness.

When he fell overboard from the *Rose* in June he was in a state of demi-somnolency and at first, he affirms, he could hardly persuade himself that he was awake ; but the coldness of the water soon convinced him of that fact, though not quite soon enough for

him to have much chance of regaining the vessel, as the tide ran rapidly and bore him past several others. Now Peter had, when an apprentice, practised the natatory art with much applause among his fellows at Peerless Pool, in the road from Finsbury Square to Islington, but he was no connoisseur in shipping: and therefore when he began to stretch out his arms and legs in a dexterous, frog-like manner, and to look about him, he was quite at a loss to know which and whereabouts was the Rose in June. He then ascertained that swimming against the tide was not so easy as going with it; and perceiving a large black-sided ship, at what appeared a moderate distance down the river, he resolved to make towards it.

But distances on the water often deceive landsmen who have been to Margate oftener than Peter Snook; and moreover it is to be recollected that this aquatic migration took

place early in the morning, as nearly as can be ascertained between one and two o'clock. The nights of August, to be sure, are not like those of November, but the outlines of things were far from distinct ; there was a mistiness on the face of the river, and our swimmer's head being low in the water, other objects might possibly appear to him with an undue elevation, and consequently nearer than they really were. Perhaps he did not make these calculations : however, the great black-sided ship seemed close at hand, and yet he swam — and swam — and called out — and swam again — and the distance was as before. At length, he says that he became fatigued — then “ uneasy in his mind ” — then “ horribly frightened ” — and at last seems, for some time, to have lost all consciousness of what was going forward. He fancied that Miss Bodkin had jumped upon his back, and seized him by the hair, and was

holding his head back for Mr. Last to “flip at.” From this dilemma he was aroused by feeling some hard substance thrust under his right arm, and buoying him up, while a hoarse voice cried out—“Hallo! my fine fellow, who are you?—Where do you come from?”

“My name’s Peter Snook, linendraper, Bishopsgate Street,” was the reply, “and I’m just a-wheugh!—a-tischoo!—just come from Margate.”

“No bad swim that,” observed the interrogator. “I suppose you feel yourself a little fatigued, so, Peter Snook, lay hold of the hook, and we’ll hoist you into the boat, and then take you aboard our ship.”

Our hero now discovered that the support under his arm was an oar, adroitly placed there by one of the boat’s crew, while another extended a boat-hook for the purpose of catching a firmer hold of him by his apparel. This,

however, was unnecessary, as he managed to obey the directions given him, and “in a twinkling,” he said, he found himself lying in the bottom of the boat, surrounded by a dozen dark-looking men, all so much like each other that he “didn’t know which was which,” while they and everything else seemed “to be going round.”

“Pray,” cried he, “didn’t you see nothing of never a woman as was tugging away at me?”

“Woman!” exclaimed the man who had hailed him, and who now took the helm — “was she your wife? — if so, shake the wet off yourself, and be thankful it’s no worse.”

“No,” said Peter, “she wasn’t my wife quite: but I see now that it is only my dream that run in my head, and it was all along of dreaming of she that I fell overboard.”

“Like enough — like enough,” observed the helmsman; “many a man got a tumble by

dreaming about women — a tumble into hot-water too, whereas you only fell into cold: so, mop yourself, my linendraper bold — and tell me was she a vixen or a scold?”

“She was a jill-flirt,” replied Peter, “and didn’t know her own mind.”

“You mean,” said the steersman, “that you didn’t know it, master Snook. He who can read a woman’s mind can read a comical book. I know a little bit about ’em — men can’t be happy with ’em nor without ’em. Well, you fell in love with her, I suppose — and then she played you about like a fish hooked by the nose? It’s a way they’ve all got, wife, widow, and maid — and you’re not the first with whom they’ve so played.”

“No,” said Peter, “nor the last neither; I expect she’s going the same game with that Last, the shoemaker.”

“Not exactly perhaps,” observed the steerer,

“for when they come to the last — they hold him fast.”

“She and Last may go to Jericho!” muttered Peter.

“Ship ahoy!” cried his new acquaintance. “Come, master Snook, here we are alongside — a good ship’s better than a bad bride. Come, don’t shake and shiver — because you fell into the river. We’ll find you warm clothes and a good fire — and everything else a man need desire.”

Peter said that “somehow or other” he was “very much taken, from the first,” with his host, for the steersman proved to be likewise the captain of the large black-sided ship. After ushering his guest into the cabin, he opened a locker, took out an immense black square bottle and two glasses, and then exclaimed — “Come, master swimmer — toss off a brimmer! It’s good and old — and will keep out the cold.

Then, I suppose — you'd like to change your clothes ; so, behind that curtain's my wardrobe and cot — go, and help yourself to whatever I've got."

Peter availed himself gladly of this hospitable offer ; and, while dressing himself, could not help fancying that he must be again in a dream ; so he rubbed his eyes, and asked himself one or two questions, to convince himself that he was awake ; and then, having settled that point, his next object of wonder was, that he did not feel himself at all fatigued or sleepy after his fatigue and danger.

Whether in consequence of the brimmer that he had taken, or the novelty of his new friend's jerking, jingling style of talking, or gratitude for being saved from drowning, or the beneficial effects of a cold bath, so it was, that when he had finished his toilet, he felt more inclined to sit down and have a bit of gossip than he

ever recollected previously to have been in the whole course of his life. When he emerged from behind the curtain, therefore, he was not a little pleased to observe that his host appeared to be in a similar mood.

The cabin fire was stirred up and looked brisk and cheerful; a table, which stood before it, was covered with a clean cloth, and laid out for two persons, and a couple of arm chairs stood facing each other most invitingly. The captain was walking, sailor-fashion, backward and forward; but, on the appearance of his guest, he stopped and called out, "Puck!" whereat there came bounding into the cabin a short, thin, grinning black boy, with an immense head, an enormously wide mouth, and a superabundance of thick, matted, woolly hair. Stopping short before his master, he exclaimed, "Here am I, sir—ready to fly, sir. Give but the word—I'm off like a bird."

“Humph!” thought Peter, “it seems to be the fashion to talk in rhyme here; I don’t know how I shall manage that.”

At the same time the captain replied to his imp-like servant, “Go, skip along, and tell the cook — to serve for me and Mr. Snook.”

“I’m very much obliged to you for all favours, I’m sure, sir,” said Peter, “but I’ve supped already, sir, and ate rather too much, I’m afeard, and that set me dreaming, I look upon ’t, sir.”

The captain answered — “Well, well, we will not quarrel for a name — if you but eat, to me ’tis all the same. Call it breakfast, if you will — pick a bit, or take your fill. Here ’tis Liberty Hall, my buck — so, sit you down, for here comes Puck.”

What the repast consisted of, Peter either would not or could not tell; but he often declared he never tasted such nice things in the

whole course of his life, and that the more he ate, the better his appetite became. Dish after dish was removed, and still their places were supplied by fresh dainties, while the captain ever and anon challenged him to take wines and liqueurs, the very names of which had never before reached his ears.

“He must be some very great man,” thought the draper, “and as rich as a Jew too, to live in this style. I suppose he must be governor of some of our foreign islands—Jamaiky, or Seringapatam, or Mesopotamia, or some of them sort of places, where the East Indian gentlemen of Leadenhall Street goes and picks up money like nothing; why, if my dream even about the shop were to come true, I should never be like them. Rabbit it! the rag trade’s a poor concern after all, when one comes to compare it with some others. What’s tying up brown paper parcels to sending off

ship-loads? and what's getting in one's Christmas bills to receiving boxes full of dollars and great big pieces of gold? I wish I was a merchant! and I don't see why I shouldn't: I know what the sea is now at any rate, and have got rid of my foolish prejudices and notions about the danger of trusting any goods upon it. I've a great mind to ask this gentleman how they go to work to begin; I dare say he'll tell me, for he seems to have taken a bit of a liking to me somehow."

Toward the end of the feast these fancies came upon him thicker and faster, and were much strengthened by the sumptuousness of the dessert, which consisted of fruits, marmalades, jellies, and preserves, collected from all quarters of the globe. The whole was arranged in the most tasty style; a profusion of richly cut glass decanters and beakers sparkled upon the table, displaying the various tints of their choice contents with most tempting lustre.

Then, as if by magic, descended through a hole in the roof of the cabin a massy chandelier, which Peter declared was of solid gold. The splendour of its light and the brilliancy of its glittering ornaments at first almost overpowered him, and he looked upon his host with a feeling approaching to awe.

“This is the way—I live every day,” observed the captain; “I trade all round the world—and don’t care where my sails are furled. Come, fill your glass—and give us a lass!”

“Well, sir,” said Peter, “I should be sorry to disoblige you; but really I can’t just now remember any one in particklar, for ever since I got that letter about ‘congenial souls,’ after spending my time and money in town, and five-and-twenty pounds and more at Margate, and spoiling my new pea-green coat and silk umbrella, I don’t somehow feel disposed to try my luck in that line agin.”

“So, Master Snook, by that I find—you’re

not quite easy in your mind," said the captain.

"No, sir," replied Peter, "I can't say as I am exactly. But there, it an't of no use fretting oneself about such a one as she—she go to Jericho! I'm sure I don't know why I should bother you about her. And so, sir, here's your good health, and my service to you, thanking you for all past favours, and particklarly for picking me up out o' the water; I'm sure I don't know where I should have been else."

"Making a meal—for dab, flounder, and eel," said his host. "So come, cheer up, and do not look perplexed—but say at once how I can serve you next; for when I've taken a man by the hand—I wish him plainly to understand—that I'll stick by him with word and with purse—be it for better or be it for worse."

Emboldened by this assurance and the fumes

of the delicious wines, Peter made known his desire of knowing how it was that merchants contrived to make such large fortunes, while retail linendrapers, who worked much harder, were able to put by so little.

In answer to his inquiries, the captain of the black-sided ship entered into a description of the various markets with which he traded, and, with an apparent knowledge of linendrapery articles which surprised Peter, mentioned the prices they brought in different places.

“I should like to send a few goods there very much, sir,” said the admiring guest. “I’ve got a bale of particularly prime ducks, which I shan’t be obliged to pay for these six months, at least, and then I shall give a bill at two months—that’ll make eight: do you think there’d be time enough to get a return in that time, sir?”

“Beyond a doubt—so send ’em out,” replied

the captain: "Ducks always sell—exceedingly well. And so, if you feel inclined for a venture—you 've nothing to do but make out your debenture. Or, if you're disposed a good lot to ship—I'll take it with me in my very next trip. I've a consort, too, in the river below—that's all cleared out and ready to go."

Peter returned thanks in his very best manner for this fresh instance of friendship and condescension; but, in spite of the wine and the "taking" in which he found himself towards his new acquaintance, he felt that it would be imprudent to intrust "a lot of goods abroad" with a person of whom he knew so little.

The captain resumed. "For a man of your parts, Mr. Snook, I'm persuaded—that hitherto you have much under-traded: measuring out calico! really, 'pon my word—flourishing a yard-stick's extremely absurd. Your duck

will have luck, and your prints will sell well — and send back a whole lac of rupees—who can tell? If you fry on and lie on to sell some prime madam—a gown, you'll die poor if you live long as Adam."

"Why, you see, sir," said Peter, "that it won't do for me to ship largely till I've increased my capital."

"Pish! pish!—sit and wish!" cried the captain; "a man of your merit—must surely have credit?"

"Why yes," replied Peter, rubbing his hands, and tossing off a glass of wine, "I think I may say that there an't a wholesale house in the city as wouldn't be glad to have me on their books; wherever I go, I'm plagued to buy, and last night even, on board the *Rose* in June, I had a card put into my hand." Here he went on to relate his interview with Messrs. Jobb, Flashbill, and Co.'s clerk; and, having

once got upon the subject of his credit in the market, upon which he prided himself not a little, he seems to have been disposed to convince his host that he likewise was somebody in his own way. He mentioned the names of several houses with which he had dealt largely, and others were drawn from him by questions adroitly put by his companion, who appeared to be gratified by the vain confidence of his guest, till there remained no more names to tell.

Then the captain said, “ Now, if my name was Peter Snook—I’d put that name in every book : next to those who inherit—are they who have credit. Waiting till you’ve got capital puts me in mind of him—who wouldn’t go into the water till he had learnt to swim : if you’ve got the itch for getting rich, do all in your power—don’t lose an hour.”

“ If I could be sure of getting my returns

in time to meet the bills——” said Peter, doubtingly.

“ My good friend,” said the captain, “ you treat me with too much deference — you can’t suppose that I don’t mean to give you a reference? Or, if you’ve a mind to take a berth on board — you can sell for yourself, and keep your own hoard. You see the way we’ll live in each day — better than sheeps’ necks with dumplings of suet — if you don’t take the offer, you surely will rue it. Come, a bumper we’ll fill to the man that is bold — may he never be plagued by a vixen or scold ! And so a Bodkin pierced your heart — and still you feel a little smart ? But as for me and my jovial crew — we care for no faces, unless they’re new ; all we toil for is plenty of gold — for we know that love is bought and sold.”

“ Perhaps it may !” sighed Peter ; “ and yet I don’t think that that shoemaking-fellow

has got much——But, pshaw! they may both go to Jericho! Well, sir, here's your toast! Bless me, what beautiful wine! it's as smooth as a piece of glazed cambric! Well, sir, I do think I shall have a bit of a speculation, and if you could contrive to give a call in Bishopsgate Street, just to put me in the way at first going off, I'm sure I don't know how I shall thank you enough. I can't give you such wine as this, though; the more I drink of it the better I feel, and seem to see things clearer somehow."

"Yes," observed the captain, "that's always the way—the longer you stay, the more you'll be pleased with whatever you see—in me and this good ship's company."

"Pray, sir," said Peter, "may I make so bold as to ask the name of the ship we're in?"

Ay, ay," replied the captain, with a singular

smile, “ she ’s called The Deluder—and those who ’ve pursued her—although they flatter themselves at first—are always sure to come off the worst.”

“ It ’s a droll name,” observed Peter ; “ she ’d pretty near deluded me to some purpose ; I thought I was close to her. How was it you happened to see me ? ”

“ We know pretty well what we ’re about—and always keep a good look out,” replied his host.

Of their conversation for some time after this Peter could give but a very indistinct account, as, according to his statement, he fell into a sort of reverie, during which he pictured to himself what a delightful thing it would be to go in such a vessel, and with such a captain, and living in such a manner, to see “ foreign parts,” and sell lots of goods for double and treble what they cost ; but he solemnly denied

having ever for a moment thought seriously of taking such a step, and declared that he would not even have shipped Mr. Coddle's ducks unless the reference promised him had proved amply satisfactory.

Some persons have, however, thought proper to conclude, that during this period his host completed the work of temptation, and induced him to go on shore, and act as has been already related ;—be that as it may, his own tale goes on to state, that he was roused from his trance by the strange-looking black boy, Puck, who entered the cabin with his clothes, which had, to his astonishment, been already washed, cleansed, dried, and brushed, in so masterly a style, that no appearance of his accident remained.

“ Puck, though no beauty—is up to his duty,” observed the captain.

“ I'm sure, sir,” said Peter, “ I never shall

be able to thank you enough. Why, they look every bit as well as ever !”

“ Yes,” quoth his host, “ my scourers never spare their pains — but rub away till they hide all stains. Perhaps the cloth may become the thinner — but will serve very well to cloak a sinner. My clothes fit you exactly, I see—so, come, let us try if your’s will fit me.”

As he uttered the last words, he rose, threw the newly brushed-up suit over his arm, and went behind the curtain. Peter thought this an odd whim, yet fancied there was something friendly about it, too; and, when left alone, he muttered to himself — “ Suppose he should take it into his head to change clothes ! I shall have the best of it, at any rate : I never see so thick a silk as this waistcoat in my life ; and the shirt and cravat are real India :” and he went on examining the different articles of his dress, till the captain made his reappear-

ance, exclaiming, " Well, master Snook—how do I look?"

" Look !" cried Peter, staring as if he could not believe his eyes, " why, sir, if I didn't know I was sitting here, I should say it was myself !"

" Ah !" said the captain, " the tailor's the man—deny it who can. 'Tis he makes the mendicant, beggar, and squire—priest, soldier, and mountebank, dandy, and friar. So, just lend me your clothes for an hour or more—as there's something I want to do on shore ; some private business of my own—in doing which I wouldn't be known."

Peter replied that it was impossible to refuse so simple a request to a gentleman who had so greatly obliged him, but took the liberty of hinting that he must be in town early in the day, as he had to provide for a heavy bill which came due on the morrow. The captain

told him to make his mind easy on that head, and recommended him to “turn in,” and take a few hours’ rest, assuring him that he should be called in good time, and that there would be a boat alongside ready to convey him to Billingsgate, and land him there between eight and nine. He then took leave, saying, “changing characters and clothes — that’s the way this world goes; some for better, and some for worse — to shun or hide an empty purse: for, whether sneaking, cunning, or bold — all agree in loving gold.”

When his host was gone, Peter could not help ruminating a little on the extraordinary resemblance between them, which a change of clothes seemed to have effected, as the captain had previously appeared a much taller, stouter, and darker man than himself. But as this was the second night since he had been to bed, exhausted nature urged her

claims for repose with a force not to be resisted: moreover, Puck had drawn aside the curtain, and the captain's cot, with snow-white sheets and down pillows, presented a most tempting and striking contrast to the little dingy berth into which he had crept for a few minutes on board the *Rose* in June. So Peter deferred all thoughts of thinking till the morrow — and yawned, and undressed, and threw himself into bed, and pulled the clothes over him, and turned half-round, and, according to his own account, knew nothing of what passed from that time till his host called upon him to get up, if he wished to arrive at Billingsgate between eight and nine. His own clothes were then lying by the bedside, and the captain was dressed much as when they first met, and appeared as dark, tall, and stout as then; so Peter, while dressing, concluded that he must have been half-asleep when he fancied the ex-

traordinary resemblance. The next change that struck him was, that the captain had laid aside his doggrel style of speaking, and was rather blunt in his mode of expressing himself.

“Come, tumble up! master Snook,” cried he, “you’ve had a precious long snooze of it, ever since four o’clock yesterday morning!”

“Eh? — what?” exclaimed Peter. “You told me I should be called in time to get to Billingsgate between eight and nine!”

“So you will, this morning,” said the captain, “if you dress quick. But you boasted so much about your credit, that I thought I’d let you have your sleep out, as you will be in plenty of time for your bill that comes due to-day.”

“So I shall,” observed Peter, proudly. “Perhaps I haven’t quite enough in my bankers’ hands, but I know where to look for a hundred or so in case of need; that’s one comfort.”

[The reader will here observe, that if there be any truth in the linendraper's tale, he must have slept double the length of time mentioned by the captain of the Deluder.]

“ Ay, ay,” said his host, “ friends are good things at a pinch ; I'd recommend you to make the most of them.”

“ Thank ye, sir,” said Peter, “ I'm sure I shall remember you as one of 'em ; for if you hadn't a picked me up out o' the water——”

“ Bah !” exclaimed the captain, “ I'd my own reasons for that. Perhaps you'll know them some day, when we come to be better acquainted.”

Now, whether it was that the delicate fare of their former repast was not repeated on the present occasion, or that he missed the jingling rhymes, Peter declared that he did not feel “ so much taken” with his host, as when they were sitting over their wine together. Some account

for this change in his feelings by supposing that the captain, having answered his own purpose by going on shore, no longer cared to make himself agreeable — a mode of conduct well adapted to the name of his ship.

“ Well, sir,” said Peter, “ I trust, anyhow, you won’t find me ungrateful ; and if you ’ll just give me a call in Bishopsgate Street——”

“ Ay, ay,” cried the captain, “ we shall find plenty of time to talk it all over, shipping specs. and all. I shall be in the city at ’Change time, and see what ’s going on.”

Peter said nothing about the ducks, not feeling quite so sanguine as when the wine was before him ; and shortly after he was handed down the side of the ship into the barge, while his host shouted after him — “ You had better keep snug in the cabin, as there are no rails on deck, and it ’s ten to one but you ’ll tumble overboard again.”

As this advice appeared extremely kind and judicious, and the morning was dark and foggy, he went down immediately and ensconced himself by the side of a small fire, where he said he passed, as he supposes, many hours. Sometimes one of the crew would come in, to put something on or take something off the fire, but whenever he attempted to enter into conversation, according to the immemorial custom of passengers, by asking when they should reach their place of destination, the only answers he could obtain were — “Ay, ay, sir;” “Time enough yet;” and “Depends on the weather.” This, he said, was exceedingly dull, and therefore when he saw Mr. Pester at the cabin door, he felt much rejoiced, conceiving him to be a passenger for Billingsgate. That gentleman’s and Mr. Butt’s subsequent conduct, he described as having come upon him like a clap of thunder: and when he was

afterwards made prisoner by the two men and the boy, whom he had never seen, but who declared they knew him, all was like a dream. And even when he was committed to prison, he affirms that he often found great difficulty in convincing himself that things were as they seemed, till he found himself brought before his creditors, and heard their strange statements and false accusations; and then he came to the conclusion that a conspiracy had been formed against him. And he steadily persevered in affirming this singular tale to be a matter-of-fact, notwithstanding the positive assertions of his creditors, and the evidence of others, concerning the transactions in which they declared him to be the actor during the time when he describes himself to have been asleep on board the Deluder.

Certain humane persons, imagining that there might be some sort of ground-work for

his story, instituted an inquiry on the river; conceiving that, if he had been picked up by the captain of a ship in the manner described, some particulars of his conduct might be obtained, and thereby they might be enabled to judge whether fear had really disordered his faculties: but the search was vain; no one knew anything of the Deluder; and as for black-sided ships on the Thames, they were somewhat too numerous to leave any chance of hitting upon the right. Peter's description of her, too, was too much in the "landlubber's" style to afford any clue. When asked how many masts she had, he replied, "I'm sure I don't know—I didn't count 'em; but at least half a dozen, and some of them went sideways; and the cabin I was in was down stairs, and had windows in it instead of a skylight at top, like the Rose in June."

After several interviews with his patient, the

medical gentleman who had been summoned declined risking his professional character by giving an opinion singly on the case; and the creditors declined calling in more of his learned brethren, as also Mr. Snap's proposal for a commission of inquiry. So it was understood among them that Peter Snook was to be considered perfectly in possession of his intellects till their dividends were all paid, after which every gentleman would be at liberty to judge for himself.

Accordingly, his debts were collected and his stock in trade disposed of with unusual celerity, and a pleasant discovery was made of the money drawn out from his bankers. It appeared to have been paid in, on the same memorable day, to a house at the west end of the town, in the name of Paul Shock, Esq., and the clerk who received it felt no doubt of Peter's being the person who paid it, but

declined swearing for the same reasons as those given by the steward of the *Rose* in June. So altogether such a sum was raised, that, when every one had received twenty shillings in the pound, and all expenses were paid, there still remained a surplus of between three and four hundred pounds for the unfortunate man.

Mr. Snap suggested a prosecution against him for attempting to run away; but, when creditors unexpectedly receive their demands in full, they are observed often to become suddenly very amiable, merciful, and considerate persons. So they unanimously resolved to drop all farther inquiry either into the state of Peter's morality or sanity, and several went so far as to say that they were really sorry for the poor man.

Before these final arrangements were made, however, Peter Snook seemed to have resigned

himself to his fate, though he always persisted in the truth of his strange tale. He volunteered to give every requisite information respecting the state of his affairs, and the only difference that Ephraim Hobson observed in him was, the lack of those occasional fits of merriment in which he was wont formerly to indulge.

On one occasion only was he seen to laugh and appear to enjoy what was going forward, and that was when Mr. Snap, having written several times without effect to request Miss Clarinda Bodkin to settle her account, determined to exert the influence of the law. The people at whose house she lodged said that she was gone to Margate, and they expected would have been back long since, but now they did not know when she would come. So forthwith a writ was issued describing the fair Clarinda as being “skulking up and down,

and to and fro, in the county of Kent, under hedges and in by-ways," &c. &c.; and when the said writ was shown to Peter, he appeared exceedingly tickled at it and laughed and rubbed his hands as in the olden time. He could scarcely have enjoyed the thing more could he have known the result, which was, that, on being presented in due form with the strange paper at Margate, Miss Bodkin instantly repaired with the bearer to consult her dear Mr. Last. The bootmaker cast his eye over the document, and appeared much surprised, but asked her politely to take a seat, and wait while he went to consult a lawyer. He then left her, went into his bed-room, packed up his trunk, and shipped himself on board a hoy which was on the point of sailing, having first told his sisters, whom he found on the pier, that their new friend was a "take in," and a person in embarrassed circumstances,

and, in short, was just going to be taken to prison. The young ladies declared there was no knowing nobody, and that they were very much shocked, scandalized, horrified, and so forth, and talked of fainting away, but, instead of so doing, went for a long walk into the country, hoping that their "dear friend" would be tired of waiting till their return.

Such indeed was the case, for Miss Bodkin, after sitting till her own patience and that of her companion were exhausted, accompanied the latter to the office of his employer, who condescendingly offered to arrange the matter for her upon the production of one of her hoarded exchequer-bills.

Her two "dear amiable friends," who had shown her "so much polite attention," were "not at home" when she called in the evening; and early the next morning they followed their brother's example, and embarked for Lon-

don, declaring that they could not show their faces in Margate again, after having been seen so much in the company of such a person as that Miss Bodkin. Such was the separation of these “ congenial souls !”

As for Peter, when his affairs were arranged, he went and settled himself in a town in the west of England, where his story was not known, and in due time married a wife and, when we last heard of him, had a family, all of which he in turn wished occasionally at Jericho ; but, upon the whole, he appears to have lived tolerably comfortably, and not to have swerved from those habits of steady industry which he practised in former days till he took to “ gadding about with that Miss Bodkin,” going to Margate, drinking brandy, falling overboard, &c. &c. &c.

The public in general (by which term we are to understand those few individuals who in-

terest themselves about any particular person, book, or transaction) were much divided in opinion respecting the real character and conduct of Peter Snook. There were a few who implicitly believed his tale, and considered him to be the victim of some mystical and incomprehensible agency; among these were old Molly and Ephraim Hobson, and the latter often shuddered when thinking of what sort of company he drank too much punch with at Queenhithe.

Some called our hero a fool, and others pronounced him to be a very clever fellow, while many declared that he was a rascal, who had endeavoured to run away and rob his creditors, and considered that he had been dealt with far too leniently.

We give no opinion, but leave our readers to judge for themselves, and conclude by observing, that, if Peter Snook committed the

facts laid to his charge, he is not the first who, when the consequences of his crime have borne heavily upon him, has endeavoured to exonerate himself by talking of "The Deluder."

“ FOLLOW YOUR NOSE.”

“ FOLLOW YOUR NOSE.”

CHAPTER I.

GASPAR WIENBRENNER lived at the village of Hugilsheim, situated in the level plain between Rastadt and Lichtenau, on the road to Kehl and Strasbourg. He was as happy as an ill-tempered indolent man could possibly be, inasmuch as he was the sole proprietor of the principal shop in the place, and dealt in all sorts of commodities, which were handed across the counter by his industrious wife, while he sate at the door, smoking his Meerschaum

pipe, commonly about four feet in length. Pipe-sticks were the only articles of commerce with which he ever troubled his head, and of those he purchased large quantities, in order that he might select the longest and best for his own particular gratification. What remained were usually disposed of by his good woman, at Frankfurt fair, to which she paid an annual visit, — but still she complained that she was always “overdone with the article.” As she never grumbled upon any other topic, and his dinner was always well cooked and ready at noon, Gaspar thought she ought to be indulged in her single weakness, and so heard her, usually without interruption, and then bought the next lot of perforated cherry-tree that was offered to him.

The venders of that commodity were the only persons with whom he condescended to enter into anything like conversation. To all

others, whether buyers or sellers, he gave a slight inclination of his pipe, and said, "Follow your nose." Such was likewise his reply when applied to by strangers for information respecting their route; and applications of that kind were of course frequently made to one who lived and breathed, or rather smoked in the high road, serving merely, as some thought, for a sign to his shop.

Many persons dislike the tedious cross-questioning frequently inflicted in consequence of being compelled to ask one's way; but a far greater number object to a short and not over-civil answer; and certain of the latter ventured occasionally to express their disapprobation of Gaspar Wienbrenner's style of giving directions. Such expostulations served but to amuse him; for being, as hinted before, but an ill-conditioned subject himself, he liked much to see others out of temper. So, on

these occasions he would smile scornfully, eject three or four fragrant whiffs, and repeat the pithy obnoxious sentence, in all the conscious security of being, if he chose to get up, full six feet in height, brawny and bony, and endowed with a profusion of black bristling hair, covering a bull front, beetling brows, and somewhat more than three-quarters of the lower part of his visage, in a most formidable style.

Such was Gaspar Wienbrenner, and such were his occupations. He had no friend but his pipe, and probably would have sate before his shop-door, and smoked his friend till the light of that and the lamp of life went out together, but for an unexpected event.

The plain in which Hugilsheim is situated, lies, as everybody knows, between the Rhine and an accumulation of hills, beyond which is the beautiful valley of the Murg, or Murg

Thal, so called from the rapid river Murg, which there comes dashing and sparkling along out of the Black Forest. No contrast could be more striking than the indolent, exhaling style in which Gaspar Wienbrenner breathed the breath of life, and the general activity of that long, narrow, winding vale. There it is not merely the torrent which is in constant motion; the echo of the woodman's axe is ever heard amid the pine-clad hills which lift their summits to the clouds; and ever and anon a fallen monarch of the forest, divested of its verdant palmy branches, comes gliding, rolling, leaping, and thundering down the precipices, like some wild beast that, mortally wounded by the hunters, dreams of escape in one last desperate plunge.

It is a pleasant sight then to see the busy workmen congregated round the fallen giant, binding him, as a captive, with others of his

kind, and launching the whole triumphantly upon the turbulent and roaring stream, to shoot the waterfalls, and thread the maze of sharp-projecting rocks, under the guidance of bold and experienced raftsmen.

There are many other uses to which the inhabitants of the Murg Thal turn their beloved and impetuous river. They have their iron-works and their saw-mills, and here and there, between the hills, are rich water-meadows, as carefully irrigated as those of England or Lombardy ; but of these it is needless to say more, as the traffic in wood was that which alone interested Gaspar Wienbrenner. How anything beyond the cloud of his pipe could interest him, may seem a marvel, yet it came to pass according to the common course of nature, and in the following manner.

Eugene Schmelzle of Oberzroth had worked his way gradually upward in the world, first as

a pilot to the half-formed rafts just alluded to, on which, balancing himself adroitly, he guided their arrowy flight to the Rhine. Then he practised the same art, with less danger and greater profit, on the Rhine itself, and made many voyages on those enormous, floating, townlike collections of timber, which wind their huge flexible jointed lengths along, each summer, towards the north. Then, step by step, he became shareholder and proprietor in similar speculations; and at length was enabled to purchase for himself an estate in his native valley, on which he lived and cut down his own timber for a foreign market. Then he planted and he built, and devised many schemes for the future; but they were all rendered abortive by the interference of the great enemy to all mortal undertakings. He was gathered to his fathers; and having left neither wife nor children, his property devolved upon a distant

relation, whom he had never seen. Perhaps if he had, he might have chosen another heir, for that relation was no other than our volcanic acquaintance, who lived in the high-road between Rastadt and Kehl.

“I believe this is Mein Herr Wienbrenner’s?” said the lawyer who brought the important news to Hugilsheim.

“Follow your nose,” replied Gaspar, pointing with his pipe to the shop-door, for he doubted not that the stranger was either a customer or a rider for orders. But the lawyer, having obtained directions at the inn, felt confident of the identity of the figure smoking before him, and therefore continued, “My business is with you, sir, and of a private nature.”

“Humph!” grunted Wienbrenner, “what’s it about?”

“You knew the late worthy Herr Eugene Schmelzle of Oberzroth?” inquired the stranger.

“ No,” replied Gaspar.

“ That is extraordinary,” observed the lawyer ; “ but nevertheless he was a kinsman of yours, and a most worthy character. He has not left his equal behind either in the Murg Thal or the Black Forest.”

“ Humph !” said Gaspar — “ owe him for some pipe-sticks, suppose. If you’ve brought the account, follow your nose, and my wife will pay you.”

The lawyer was an experienced, meagre, little, elderly personage, dressed in black ; so he sat himself down upon a small stool which happened then to be divested of its usual equipage of Seltzer water and kirchenwasser, and then, being below the clouds which issued from the mouth of his client, advanced nearer to that formidable individual, and in a low tone, and with the most deferential but somewhat self-important air, proceeded to divulge the secret of his mission.

With the exception of the labial process necessary for smoking, not a muscle of Wienbrenner's countenance moved on this occasion, till the stranger, having paid many eulogiums to the deceased, began to state the nature of the property which he had left behind him. There were houses and tenements, a meadow and woods, a share in a saw-mill, quarter of a raft then going down the Rhine, a quantity of floating timber on the Murg, and so on.

“Are there any cherry-trees?” inquired Wienbrenner, breaking silence for the first time.

“Really, I do not know,” replied the lawyer, somewhat surprised, in spite of his experience, at the apparent oddity of the question.

“Pish !” said Gaspar, and he went on whiffing as before.

Whatever else the messenger of good tidings said at that sitting was lost upon his

client, who had caught an idea, and one idea being sufficient for him at one time, he followed it with all the dreamy gratification of which his narcotic habits left him susceptible: it struck him that it would be a pleasant thing to have pipe-sticks from trees growing on his own land. He fancied himself in the midst of his orchard, pointing out, with experienced eye, the branches which should be lopped off, and put by, and dried, and perforated; and his heart almost glowed within him at the pride he should feel when sending certain of the said pipe-sticks to mine host, and certain other inveterate smokers of the village of Hugilsheim. This anticipated gift was not the offspring of any feeling of generosity or friendship towards the said individuals; it was the result of sheer pride, vanity, and ambition. He saw fame in it, and pictured to himself that his gifts, with his name attached to them, would be

carefully preserved, and perhaps handed down to future generations. Alas! how many have built their hopes of fame on things more fragile and less likely to endure than a cherry-tree pipe-stick !

Our smoker's reverie was terminated by the unpleasant reflection that the existence of his well-beloved trees remained a matter of uncertainty, and he forthwith cast a contemptuous and almost angry glance at the lawyer, who had pretended to give him all the particulars of his deceased relative's estate, and yet had neglected to inform himself upon the point of most importance.

The man of law was sorely puzzled and much disappointed at this treatment, for he had not doubted that the result of his communication would be the securing of, if not a warm friend, at least a warm client. But, luckily for him, it was now the hour of noon,

and the signal-tap at the window announced that dinner was ready.

“Follow your nose,” said Mein Herr Wienbrenner, somewhat more graciously than before; “you can dine with us and tell my wife all about it, as I don’t like much talking.”

The good woman received not the intelligence of this sudden accession of property with the same apathy as her spouse; for, though she was always civil and obliging to her customers, and appeared cheerful in her vocation, yet was she in reality weary of it, and the prospect of quitting the shop was to her like a reprieve to a galley-slave on whom sentence of detention has been passed for life. Her habits of business induced her to look into and over the various documents brought by the lawyer.

“See if you can find any cherry-trees,” said Gaspar, laying down his knife and fork and taking up his pipe.

Gertrude was an obedient wife, as most wives are who are married to great, black, bear-like husbands; so she conned over the papers and parchments with all due diligence and alacrity, and soon found a rough ground-plan of their late relative's estate.

“ Here ! ” cried Wienbrenner, stretching out his hand, and immediately the paper was delivered to him.

The interest which he felt at that moment must have been excessive, as he had already filled his pipe, and yet forbore to light it. For three minutes his huge right forefinger continued to move slowly over the lines, crossing woods, fields, gardens, houses, &c. and then it came to a stand-still upon a spot where it was joined by its left hand fellow, and both were pressed violently upon the place, as if to take formal possession. After detaining them in that position for about ten seconds, Gaspar

took up his neglected tube, uttered a triumphant “ Ugh !” and then got up and walked out to occupy his accustomed place in the open air. He had discovered the much desired cherry-trees, and, elate with his discovery, he sent forth tremendous whiffs in double-quick time, even as though he were triumphantly blowing a trumpet. How many ways there are of expressing our gratification !

In process of time, the shop at Hugilsheim was disposed of, and Gaspar and his spouse removed to Oberzroth, she to enjoy her *otium cum dignitate*, and he to vary the scene of his fumigations. Little had he formerly dreamt of changing his place so often, but there were no less than a hundred cherry-trees on his new domain ; so each day he sat himself down before one, and gave himself up to a contemplation of those branches and shoots which were most promising, giving directions to a lad,

whom he kept perched up aloft for that purpose, to mark with white paint those which he designed as a *bonne bouche* for himself and smoking acquaintance, in order that they might be lopped off in due season. Thus the remaining hundred days of his first summer and autumn were fully occupied, though they passed not without vexation consequent upon the difficulty of procuring boys of sufficiently sedate and sedentary habits.

They all objected to being stuck up all day long in a cherry-tree; and as Wienbrenner, in giving directions, often used his old phrase, "Follow your nose," it frequently came to pass that crooked and unseemly branches were marked with the honourable white. These blunders induced objurgation on one side, and grumbling on the other; and the urchins carried home their own edition of their aërial difficulties to their mothers, declaring that it was

impossible to please their new master ; and the mothers related the same to the fathers, who forthwith withdrew their sons from their post : so it was that almost all the lads of the village spent a day or two under, or, more strictly speaking, above the eyes of our egregious smoker. Now, though the boys of a village, taken individually, are very far from being important personages, it is by no means a trifling misfortune to be out of favour with them as a body ; for, besides the minor miseries of orchard-robbing, &c. they are sad adepts in the art of inventing nicknames—and a nickname is considered as a serious infliction by many persons who endure more important troubles with becoming fortitude.

The soubriquet allotted to Gaspar Wienbrenner was taken from his own mouth, and he soon became known and generally spoken of by the name of “ Old follow your nose.” Of

this title he remained in blissful ignorance during the first winter, which he smoked through at his own fireside. Habit had become so strong, that perhaps, had he known it, he would scarcely have changed his style; but as it was, when spring arrived, and enabled him to exhibit himself and his pipe in the open air, he recommenced the repetition of this obnoxious sentence to every one who approached his house, and ventured to ask him a question. By this conduct he accumulated for himself a considerable deal of ill-will, and acquired the character of a surly, ill-tempered, discontented fellow. No one sought his acquaintance, and the few who had felt it a duty to call upon him on his first arrival, now, instead of turning in at his gate, preferred to "follow their noses." Little cared he for a while for this neglect; but in process of time he became sensible that there was a some-

thing wanting to his enjoyment; and that something was the occasional presence of customers and wayfaring persons, to whom he might address his wonted reply. So, after burning a few pounds of tobacco during his solitary reflections on the subject, he hit upon a plan of procuring sport for himself by smoking his pipe near the road-side, about twenty yards from his house, in a neatly laid-out flower-garden which occupied the space between. Now the said garden was fenced on the road-side by a strong quickset hedge, clipped square, about four feet in height and three feet in thickness, so that a man of his stature could easily overlook it, and perceive every approaching individual; but in order that he might not undergo the unnecessary fatigue of standing to watch for passengers where there were but few, he caused an alcove, with a single seat, to be built for himself in one corner,

whence he might perceive the advance of all who came. Unluckily for him, however, no one made any inquiries about the road, for the passers-by were generally people of the country, and needed no directions. This was extremely vexatious to Wienbrenner, but he was determined that, having built himself an alcove, and moved from his former post, so much pains and expense should not be thrown away. He therefore puffed on and cogitated, till he came to the resolution of stopping the good people as they went by. The only objection to this plan was, that it required more speaking than he was accustomed to: but men bent on sport do not mind putting themselves out of their way for the attainment of it, and Gaspar longed as much to see a face out of temper, as ever any weary, unsuccessful angler wished to see his float disappear, or his fly carried up the stream by the speckled trout.

His first essay was made upon a stout ruddy woodcutter, who came striding and whistling along with an air of perfect content and independence, his every look and movement proclaiming,

“ I care for nobody, no, not I, if nobody cares for me.”

“ Where are you going ?” cried Gaspar, coming forth from his hiding-place like a spider from his dark corner, only not quite so nimbly.

“ I ’m going to a job of work for Jahn Muller, above Hilpertsan,” replied the man, touching his hat, and looking well pleased that the new-comer should condescend to take any interest in him and his occupations.

Wienbrenner saw the glow of satisfaction on his countenance, and chuckled within himself at the idea of the change he was about to work in it. He then blew two or three preparatory whiffs, gave a loud hem, and, scarcely

able to avoid laughing, said, "Follow your nose."

The man stared, but being a good-tempered fellow, and withal a sufficiently shrewd observer to notice the expression of glee in Gaspar's face, he conceived that there must be some joke in the business, though he could not exactly perceive where the point lay. So, instead of putting himself in a passion, he laughed likewise, and replied, "Ay, to be sure—follow your nose; that's the way to Hilpertsan, sure enough."

Gaspar's black brows grew cloudy at this disappointment, and in a louder, rougher, and more commanding tone he cried, "Follow your nose!"

The forester then looked black in his turn, and muttered, "If you stop people on the high road to ask questions, you might keep a civil tongue in your head, at any rate."

“ Follow your nose !” roared Wienbrenner, triumphantly—“ follow your nose ! follow your nose !” and then, giggling immensely at his own cleverness, he withdrew to his seat, and watched his victim from behind the trellis-work, through which clouds of self-satisfaction issued in dense volumes.

The woodcutter, after venting his spleen in a volley of oaths, which were as sweet music to the ears of his tormentor, went on his way ; but the insult which he had received effectually silenced his whistling for the remainder of his walk, and continued long after to dwell upon his mind.

As there was no great variety in Gaspar’s achievements, it may suffice to say, that from that period he never allowed man, woman, or child to pass without seeking an opportunity to annoy them with his well-beloved and irritating ejaculation. In time, however, the people of

the neighbourhood became too wary, and were not to be entrapped ; but still there remained some little sport with strangers, who were ever and anon passing his door in their way to and from the Black Forest ; and in proportion as his game became scarce he became more vigilant, and less scrupulous respecting the appearance of those whom he accosted.

Everybody knows that the Black Forest has long been celebrated for the manufactory of wooden clocks and carved toys of various descriptions, as well as for the whisky-like spirit drawn from the cherry, and called therefore kirchenwasser. If we are to believe all, or even half of what has been said and written on the subject, there are many other sorts of spirits familiar to that extensive district. Of these, like beings of less power and importance, some are accounted good, some bad, and others indifferent ; but the real character of the greater

proportion has probably never been accurately ascertained, inasmuch as their visits and appearances to poor mortals of the ordinary stamp have usually been very brief. It seems, however, to be agreed on all hands that strange personages have been seen in and about, and coming in, and going out of, the said Black Forest.

Having hinted thus much, it will appear very evident that our eccentric fumigating acquaintance was doing what we are most of us too apt occasionally to do, namely, he was seeking his gratification and hazarding his jokes on very dangerous and ticklish ground. That he had become a proverb and a by-word has been already hinted, and in a short time he was generally voted a public nuisance. The fame and singularity of his exploits spread far and wide, and reached the innermost recesses of the forest, where, as they formed the subject

of conversation among the woodcutters, it seems probable that they reached the ears of certain of the singular personages just alluded to; if not, it will be somewhat difficult to account for that which is to follow.

The important process of getting in his harvest of pipe-sticks had been attended to in due season. They were carefully straightened, and deposited, side by side and tier upon tier, with seasoned planks between each layer, in an out-house through which the air passed freely; and on rainy days their owner would sit and smoke before the precious pile, with something like the vain-glorious feelings of King Nebuchadnezzar when he exclaimed, "Behold this Babylon which I have raised!"

CHAPTER II.

IT was a fine sunny morning, and the little alcove sent forth wreaths of curling smoke, which playfully twined and hung for a while amid the huge gourd-leaves, and then were wafted down the wind: Gaspar Wienbrenner was at his usual occupation. It was half-past eleven o'clock, and not a single opportunity of telling any one to follow his nose had yet occurred.

“It is very provoking!” thought the cloud-blowing recluse; “what is the use of riches if they deprive one of pleasure? If I was now at the shop-door of Hugilsheim, I’ll be bound

to say some noodle or another would ask me a question in less than a minute. This is a terrible dull place ! I can't think why old Schmelzle didn't find somebody else to leave his rafts to. The cherry-trees are something, to be sure ; but then it is a hárd case to be sent into banishment for the sake of supplying one's friends with pipe-sticks. If I was unreasonable in my wishes, it would be another thing ; but just let me see two or three, or say half a dozen, people every day to say three words to, and I am content. But no, not a soul has come near me all the live-long morning !—hang me, if it is to be borne ! If I was an Englishman, I should have hung myself long ago, and, as it is, I don't think I can stand it much longer."

While grumbling in this manner, he continued from habit to keep his eyes fixed upon the road, and was greatly cheered at perceiving

a pedestrian approaching at an easy pace. Gaspar immediately quitted his hiding place, and the stranger advanced with the deliberate, measured step of one fatigued by a long walk.

He was an elderly personage, dressed in a dark brown, coarse, woollen frock-coat and pantaloons, and wore a huge-brimmed, low-crowned, slouching hat. He came from the Black Forest, and our quondam shopkeeper decided that he must have gone there for the purpose of traffic; but that was of little consequence, as he soon proclaimed himself to be a stranger by advancing boldly to the close, square-trimmed, thickset hedge, and inquiring if he was in the right road for Gernsbach.

“Follow your nose!” roared Gaspar, scarcely able to contain himself till the question was uttered.

“That is an odd direction,” observed the stranger, with a very odd sort of smile, which

somewhat perplexed his director, who nevertheless replied as before—

“ Follow your nose !”

The man with the slouched hat immediately placed his stick before him, leaned with both hands upon it, and looked Gaspar full in the face in a manner which somewhat startled even him, and would probably have greatly alarmed any one else. There was a very piercing, glaring, uncomfortable brilliancy in the dark eyes of this strange personage ; and below them was a small, hawk-like hooked nose, wrinkled up scornfully about the nostrils ; and below them spread a huge-lipped mouth of formidable dimensions, amply sufficient alone to have prevented its owner from being asked out to dine. The whole expression of that swarthy, meagre visage might have puzzled the most erudite and practised of the disciples of Lavater, for in it there was a wild mingling of contempt and

triumph, of malice, pleasure, conscious power, mischief, fun, and self-glorification.

The worst fault of all, and the most perplexing, in Gaspar's opinion, was the total absence of anything like anger, that beloved ebullition which it was his pleasure to excite; but, judging by his past experience, he calculated that there must soon be a breaking out of it, if he did but persevere, so he manfully shouted, "Follow your nose!"

"You are a bold man," observed the stranger; "do you know whom you are talking to?"

"Oho!" thought Wienbrenner, "the spell begins to work!" And he replied, "Not I: if you were the grand duke himself, all I've got to say is, follow your nose!"

"It is a good thing for you that I am not on horseback," said the man in the broad brim.

Gaspar now began to enjoy himself, for he

felt conscious of his superior bodily strength, and considered the mention of a horse as a sort of vain and angry boasting of what his victim would have done under different circumstances. So he again cried out "Follow your nose!"

"Perhaps I may presently," said the stranger; "it is a way in which I sometimes indulge myself. But I give you fair warning, and strongly recommend you to leave off the bad habit of repeating the same words over and over again like a cuckoo. If there were nothing objectionable in them otherwise, the repetition would render them so; but you know very well that they are extremely offensive, and on that account——"

"Follow your nose!" roared Gaspar, interrupting him.

"Because they are offensive," continued the stranger, "you are continually making use of them: I advise you to leave off the custom."

“ Follow your nose !” shouted our smoker.

“ You are an obstinate, pig-headed fellow,” observed the elderly pedestrian. “ However, you shall not have to say that I did not give you fair play, so I again recommend you not to repeat those words; recollect this is the third time that I have offered you my advice.”

“ Follow your nose !” cried Gaspar again most triumphantly.

The face of the swarthy, hooked-nose old personage now underwent a considerable change, inasmuch as his shaggy brows descended over his eyes, and his large lips were compressed for a moment, thereby giving token that he was wroth.

“ You are the most obstinate blockhead I ever met with,” said he: “ I have advised you for your good three times, and all I have now to say is, that the next time you repeat your favourite and offensive phrase you will repent it.”

Wienbrenner had now, he conceived, worked his man into a passion, and had become himself too warmly interested in the sport to heed the threats of an insignificant elderly pedestrian. He accordingly roared out once more "Follow your nose!" in the most offensive and contemptuous manner, and then burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. It was long—very long since he had found himself in such high spirits, and his glee was in proportion to its rarity; his whiffs, his chuckling, and his grinning, were prodigious, and would have continued for a much longer time, but for a burst of strange, hollow laughter that came from the other side of the hedge.

There was a fearful wildness in that laugh which made him open his eyes much wider than usual, and gaze upon the stranger, who, assuming his former scornful, funny, inexplicable, indescribable air, said, "You have now

repeated your very distinct and inelegant instructions nine times, and I mean to follow them to the letter."

At that moment Wienbrenner and the speaker were standing face to face, the four feet, thick-set, square-cut hedge being between them; but scarcely had he uttered his intentions ere the singular personage, taking three steps forward, became plunged and apparently stuck fast in the formidable fence, his head and shoulders alone being visible, and looking very much like a painted bust placed upon it for ornament.

"Ho, ho, ho! ha, ha, ha!" shouted Gaspar; "that's one way of following your nose, sure enough! he, he, he! How do you like it? ha, ha, ha! Oh dear, what a fool the fellow is!—why don't you come on?"

"I'm coming," replied the stranger. And immediately there was heard a cracking and breaking, as he moved his legs forward, among

the ancient, tough, knotted, and twisted roots, stems, and branches ; all gave way before him, and in three steps he had passed the hedge, leaving a gap which looked as though it had been made by a mass of red-hot iron.

“ What ’s the meaning of this ? ” exclaimed the smoker.

“ I ’m following my nose,” answered the mysterious personage. And he continued steadily to advance upon Gaspar, who stepped aside just in time to prevent a personal collision, but not quickly enough to save his meerschaum pipe, which, coming in contact with the intruder, fell in a blackened, calcined state upon the ground, while its owner, accustomed to draw his breath through the tube under all circumstances, inhaled a most unsavoury mouthful of something like the fumes of burning sulphur.

Any common mouth would have been shrivelled and parched by it like a dried leaf ; but his merely emitted a slight “ Pah ! ” of dis-

approbation, and then, no longer able to relish his joke, he stared with a marvellous, stupid stare upon his unwelcome visiter, who calmly proceeded onward in a mathematical straight line. Gaspar observed his progress, and felt as if he was dreaming; trees, flowers, and shrubs, all gave way before the elderly elucidator of how to follow one's nose, and wherever he had passed, a black scorched line remained upon the ground.

The destructive march had gone on for three minutes ere Wienbrenner could summon sufficient presence of mind to bawl out, "Hallo there!—stop! what are you after? I'll make you repent of this!"

"I follow my nose," replied the stranger, in a loud, hollow, but fearfully calm and decided tone; and, without turning to look at his excited director, sedately pursued his course of destruction.

Presently he came to a huge ash-tree, through

which he walked with as much apparent ease as though it had been a cloud, but with a very different effect, for the perforation made by his passage left but too slight a support on either side for the upholding of the numerous and wide-spread branches above; there was a creaking and groaning, and then the whole lofty mass swayed majestically over to one side, and fell to the ground with a crash which shook the neighbourhood.

The good woman of the house was at this moment just preparing to “take up the dinner;” it may naturally be supposed, therefore, that her alarm and curiosity were excessive, since she was led to postpone the fulfilment of that important duty, and to go out to see what had happened.

It was a strange sight that met her eyes: there was the immense tree lying with all its crushed and broken limbs upon the ground,

and an elderly person came walking slowly out from the midst of it with as much coolness as though he were coming out from his own door.

“ I hope you are not hurt !” she exclaimed.

“ Not in the least, I thank you, madam,” replied the stranger, politely. “ I am sorry to have caused you any alarm ; but the simple fact is that I am following my nose, according to your husband’s instructions, and therefore I must take the liberty of requesting you to stand out of the way.”

The good woman was then between him and the house, and could see her spouse at the other end of the garden looking towards them. It struck her as being odd that he had not accompanied the elderly walker ; but what appeared yet more singular than even the fall of a tree in its prime was, that no smoke issued from Gaspar’s mouth. The long, black, straight

line of devastation was skreened from her view by the mass of recumbent foliage, and as the stranger was now arrived on an open paved space in front of the house, he left no other trace of his footsteps than certain dirty-looking marks, which, while they were annoying to her cleanly habits, excited no particular attention; consequently she had no clue to, nor any apprehension of the mystery that was going forward.

“ May I trouble you to move a little on one side, madam?” resumed the broad-brimmed elderly gentleman; “ just a step or two, as otherwise you perceive I cannot follow my nose without running against you, which would be very contrary to my intentions, and very painful to your feelings.”

This being spoken in a serio-comic style, the good housewife at once decided that the stranger was a humourist to whom Gaspar’s

wonted phrase had given the idea of having a bit of fun. It seemed a strange joke certainly, for a man to run his head against the stone wall of a house ; but odd people are odd people, she thought, and so she moved herself out of the odd person's way, muttering to herself, " You've an odd-looking sort of nose as it is, old gentleman, and I'm thinking it won't be much improved if you rub it against our house."

When the stranger, walking deliberately forward, first came in contact with the building, she could scarcely forbear laughing ; but it is impossible to describe her sensations of astonishment and dismay, when at the next step she beheld him sink into the massy stone wall, like a piece of hot iron melting and penetrating the ice, and leaving the exact imprint of its form. There was his precise figure, the cut of his coat and pantaloons, the broad-brimmed, low-crowned, slouching hat — even the stick

which he carried in his hand, all carved distinctly in the solid stone! The poor woman stared wildly, then rubbed her eyes to ascertain if she were quite awake, and when she opened them again and perceived that the man had really gone through the stone wall, she shrieked out with feminine shrillness and threw herself upon her knees.

Now when his wife stepped aside, and the stranger moved forward towards the house, they were both concealed from the eyes of Gaspar by a branch of the fallen tree, so that he did not exactly know what was going on; but when the said shriek reached his ears, he recollected that, according to the position in which his better-half stood when he went into the alcove to take a glass of kirchenwasser, the stranger must have come in contact with her, provided he adhered to following his nose.

There had already been more than sufficient

evidence of the fellow's scorching potency, so Wienbrenner proceeded mechanically to fill a fresh pipe, selected from a lot in the alcove; and, when he had lighted it, began to ruminate philosophically upon what had occurred.

"It might have been worse," thought he; "I suppose he must belong to the Forest King, or the Fire King, or some of that set, though I understood they never came out except of a night; however, it's no great matter what he is, as, if he follows his nose, there's not much chance of his coming back again. That's an ugly gap in the hedge; I suppose I must have a wicket-gate put there. As for the rest of the damages, they can very easily be repaired; a few flowers and shrubs are nothing, and trees are plenty enough here. Poor Gerty! I hope she didn't suffer much. I wonder whether the Grosneidesheim widow is married again: she was buxom and hearty enough

when I saw her last ; understands cooking too. Poor Jahn ! He used to eat too much—killed himself that way, no doubt. Didn't drink enough—that won't do—though he never was very strong upon his pins : thin legs a bad sign"—and our smoker, having thrown himself into his seat, stretched out his brawny limbs, and contemplated them in a sleepy sort of admiration.

In the mean while the brown-coated gentleman continued his progress. Two maid-servants who were busily engaged in the kitchen, on seeing a man issue from the wall, needed no other hint respecting the propriety of moving themselves out of the way, but ran out at the back-door, and hastily followed their noses till they reached the more populous part of the village, where they declared that their master's house was taken possession of by the wild spirits of the forest, which were passing to and

fro, and going in and out through the walls, like rabbits in a warren. In consequence of this alarming report, the devout catholics crossed themselves in many directions, and in a short time the bells of the church were in full swing, causing a vibration in the air, which everybody knows is understood to become in consequence unendurable to evil spirits of all kinds and denominations.

It has been averred by some devout persons that the said evil spirits flee on such occasions because they have no ear for harmony ; but if it can be proved that the visit of the rectilinear walker was shortened, or his steps hastened, by the clanging of the church bells of Oberzroth, some other cause must be found, as they were dismally discordant. Be that as it may, the unmusical sounds fell jarring on the ear of Wienbrenner, and roused him from his dreamy castle-in-the-cloud-building specula-

tions. He started up, muttered a curse upon all cracked bells and bell-pullers, and then, saying "I'll go to dinner," he proceeded, smoking away at his usual pace towards the house. The first thing that struck his attention was the dark outline of his visiter's figure, like a shadow against the wall. "Oho!" said he, "master Follow your nose, so you're come to a stand still! Schmelzle didn't spare stone. There you may stick, like a spread eagle," and he puffed out huge volumes of smoke, which doubtless tended to keep up the optical delusion till he came near the house.

"Look!" cried his wife, rising pale from the ground, and pointing to the singular aperture—"Look!—he went in there!"

"Who?—what?—how?"

"Oh, I am so frightened that I can't speak!"

"You must be frightened indeed, if that's

the case," said Gaspar, surlily. "Is dinner ready?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied she, not knowing what she said.

"Who should, then, I wonder?" muttered her husband, in a tone too well known and too much dreaded not to recall, in some degree, her scattered senses.

She looked first at her spouse's black face, and then at the dark hole in the wall, and then again at the hole, and again at his gloomy visage, and both appeared equally dismal and formidable. "What shall I do?" exclaimed the poor woman.

"Get dinner," replied Gaspar.

"I daren't go into the house!" cried she.

"Bah!" cried he, and going up to the perforation, he peeped in, and perceived that the stranger had continued to follow his nose straight through the whole of the building and

outhouses, and was gone off the premises. “A good riddance,” said our smoker; and then, turning to his wife, he continued — “The fellow’s gone! get dinner, will you?”

As soon as the poor woman’s back was turned, he began muttering and cogitating — “Humph! — she contrived to get out of the way, it seems. Well, well! what can’t be cured, must be endured. A man might have a worse wife, after all! — not a bad cook neither. Confound that fellow’s nose! That pipe cost twenty guilders, to say nothing of the stick, that is turned into charcoal. I suppose Gerty would have been so too, if he’d run against her. Humph! That would have been very extraordinary — what our philosophers call *uris nuris*, *nubis naturæ*, or some such name. Glad to have had her in the museum — look upon ’t. But pshaw! — phoo! — I don’t want money now; that is, it is no such great

object, only — if——” Here his cloudy fancies were interrupted by the reappearance of his wife. “Dinner ready?” cried he.

“No, nor won’t be to-day,” replied she.

“Eh?—what?—how?” exclaimed Gaspar, his black brows lowering like a thunder-cloud.

“Stove and all gone!” replied the desponding Gertrude, with tears in her eyes: “beef, cabbage, goose, all gone! Nothing left but the tail of a trout, and that’s burnt to a cinder.”

Hitherto Gaspar had endured his visitation with the narcotic philosophy of an opium-eater; but at this announcement his wrath burst forth with a violence proportionate to his previous retention. He rushed into the kitchen, and swore tremendously over the wreck of his anticipated dinner; and then, with his wife hanging upon the tails of his coat, he rushed out at the back of the house, vowing vengeance against the old rascal. But the old

gentleman had got the start, and was at that moment upon much higher ground at a considerable distance, walking through the invaluable orchard of cherry-trees, along a line of which his nose unluckily conducted him. About a score were already prostrate, and others were creaking and falling. Onward went Gaspar, swearing and towing poor Gerty, by whose exertions he was fortunately retarded so much as to prevent his coming up with the stranger. It has since been doubted by some whether he was not secretly pleased at being thus held back from attacking his formidable visiter; be that as it may, he was obliged to stop to take breath, when he caught sight of the slouching broad-brimmed hat moving above the quickset hedge which bounded his premises, and ere he could ejaculate a word, the stranger had disappeared. Then Wienbrenner swore certain very brief, but withal very tre-

mendous oaths, mingled with threats of what he would have done if the intruder had not taken himself off; but, having no other weapon in his hand than his pipe, he lighted that, abandoned all further pursuit, and, turning towards his wife, said, "Get something for dinner, at any rate." So the good woman went her way to prepare some salted pork and sour krout; and while she was thus engaged, her lord and master, tracing back the black line of his visiter's march, discovered with horror that he had gone through the invaluable pile of pipe-sticks, of which nothing remained but two heaps of charred fragments, powerfully redolent of sulphur. The shock produced by this spectacle is indescribable. He stood aghast; his whole frame trembled; and even the smoke which he inhaled seemed to clog his respiration, as, instead of passing away as usual, it hung densely about his visage, like a heavy cloud

clinging to the top of a hill. His rage was too great for utterance; he reeled back against the side of the shed, and probably would soon have fallen into a fit of apoplexy, had it not so happened that, just at that critical moment, a shrill and awakening sound reached his ear:—it was the voice of his wife, proclaiming, “Dinner is ready.”

The fame of this adventure spread far and wide, and caused much speculation concerning the real character of the nose-follower; but the good folks of the valley generally agreed, that such a visitation could not fail to cure Gaspar of his disagreeable habit.

A month had elapsed; a neat little white gate filled the gap in the hedge, and the other damages were nearly obliterated, when Mynheer Wienbrenner received a visit from the Abbé of Herrenalt, a person of no small consequence in these regions. Gertrude welcomed

the venerable dignitary with unsophisticated hospitality, and invited him to dinner ; and his reverence accepted her invitation, perhaps because he liked the tidy appearance of the house, and perhaps from motives of curiosity, but certainly with the intent of bestowing his advice on Gaspar, who was engaged in smoking under the cherry-trees, contemplating a fresh accumulation of pipe-sticks.

“ Bah ! ” said he to Gertrude, when she announced the rank of her visiter, “ you can tell him all about it : I hate talking ! ”

So the good woman recited the tale to her guest, and then took him into the garden, and from thence along the line of the odd-looking stranger’s march at the back of the house, which conducted them, of course, among the cherry-trees ; and there the worthy ecclesiastic perceived a cloud of smoke at some distance, and guessing the cause of it, told his hostess

that he would go and pay his respects to her husband, upon which she made her escape, to avoid being suspected of having any hand in such an intrusion, and moreover to superintend the more important affairs of the kitchen.

The Abbé harangued his host most learnedly, and was heard in silence, which he probably mistook for attention; as, after speaking of the hermit who was directed by certain nocturnal melodies to find the image of the Virgin and Child on the spot where the chapel called the Klingel was afterwards built, and enumerating other legends of the neighbourhood, he ventured to touch upon the delicate subject of bad habits, and hoped that the recent visitation had produced its intended effect.

As Gaspar continued to smoke without making any reply, the good man had it all his own way, and waxed consequently more vehement, glorifying himself not a little on the patient

attention and resignation of his auditor, on whom, he doubted not, he had made a deep impression. This scene was at length put an end to by the appearance of Gertrude, to announce that dinner was ready.

“ I perceive that your wife is approaching,” said the Abbé, “ therefore I shall add no more. If I have spoken with some degree of freedom, you will recollect that it is my duty so to do ; but I am sure that a gentleman of your evident good-sense will perceive the propriety of what I have said : I am certain that you will never in future relapse into your former habits.”

“ Dinner is waiting for us,” said Gertrude.

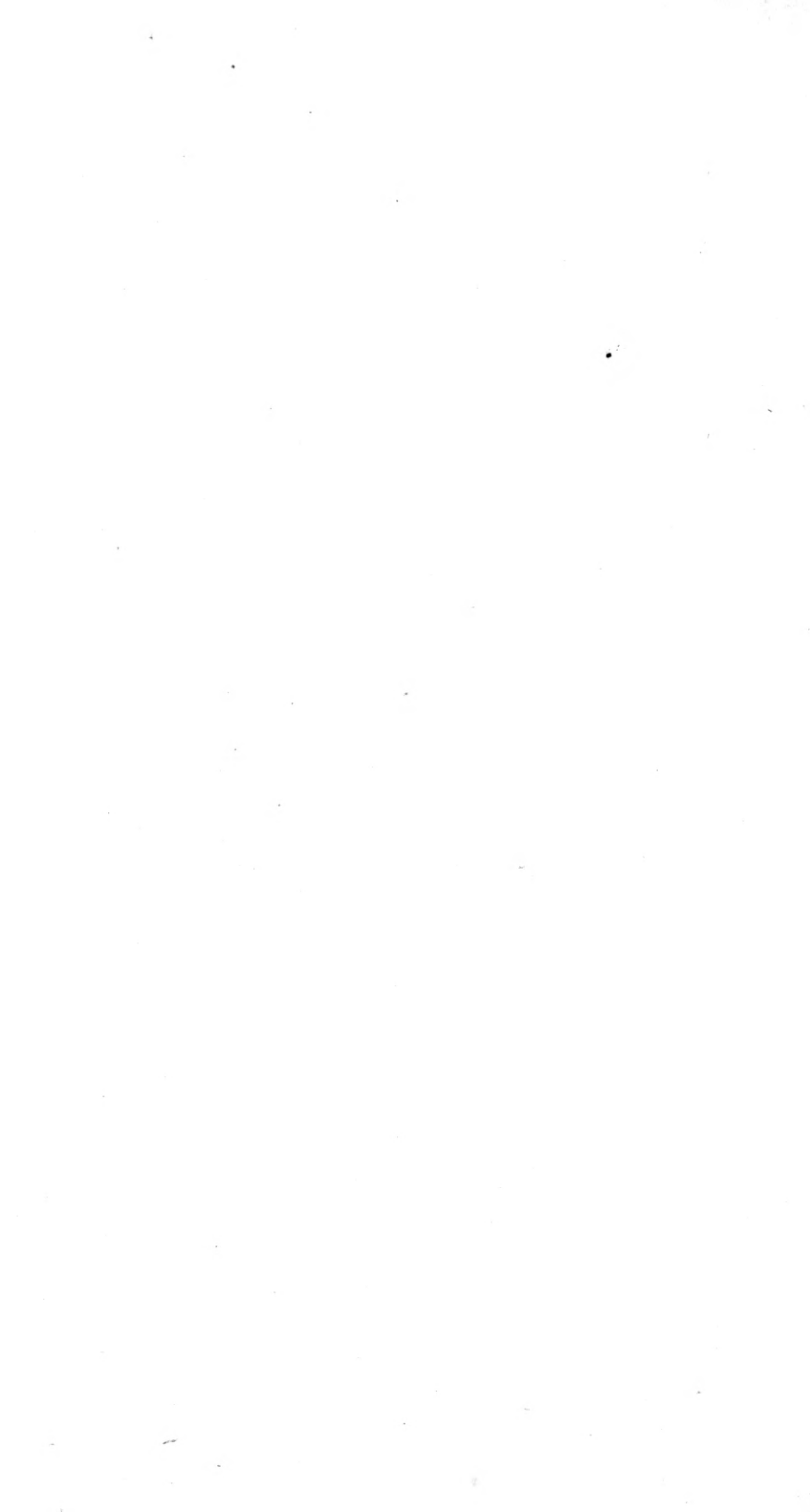
“ High time,” observed her husband : “ it ’s a quarter past——”

“ I hope my presence will not make the smallest difference,” said the Abbé to his hostess ; and then, turning to his host, he added,

“ I should be sorry to cause the least alteration in your usual customs.”

“ Follow your nose, then,” replied Gaspar, pointing with his pipe towards the house.

THE
LODGING-HOUSE BEWITCHED.



THE
LODGING-HOUSE BEWITCHED.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. JEMIMA EUPHEMIA GRUBB was a stout, plump, rubicund, double-chinned widow, between forty and fifty years of age. Her husband had been alternately in the wine-trade, the coal-trade, and the victualling-trade, in which last line, as keeper of an eating-house, he departed this life, leaving his relict little more than the Irish gentleman's splendid legacy to his expectant heir, namely, "the wide world."

Jemima Euphemia wiped her eyes with all due decorum, and continued to cut up "hot joints from twelve to four," till the butcher cut off all further supplies, and swore, in a very unmannerly manner, that he was determined to have his money; and thereupon the baker hinted that such was likewise his particular desire. Then the grocers, both sweet and green, spake to the same effect, and in due course the cheesemonger followed.

Quarter-day, too, showed its unwelcome light, and her red-nosed landlord came smiling to pay his respects to the widow, but he went not smiling away. Anon the coal-merchant made his appearance, looking black as the "article" itself in which he dealt.

Jemima gave them all a hearing and an answer, for she had no lack of words; but they turned a deaf ear, and refused to be comforted by her blandishments, unless they were accompanied with at least "something on account" of a more substantial nature.

“ Fair words butter no parsnips,” said one, in his ire.

“ Perhaps not,” observed the disconsolate widow. She reflected upon what had passed, and resolved to alter her style; so the next time she was beset, she gave full vent to her indignation, and told her creditors that they were a set of mean-spirited, cowardly, paltry fellows, who had cringed and fawned to get her custom, and now didn’t know how to behave themselves; and that they ought to be ashamed of treating a “ lone woman” in such a manner. She concluded by pathetically observing, that if her husband had been alive they would not have used her so. And in saying this she was doubtless perfectly correct, as, in such a case, the poor man himself must have borne the “ pelting of the pitiless storm” which he had left his wife to encounter; but he was now gone, and report says that he was one of those husbands who might probably be speedily forgotten, or at least not be very sincerely lamented,

did they not contrive to leave behind them certain disagreeable mementoes of their previous existence.

Whether a desire of being held in remembrance by his Jemima, or the thirst for present gratification, induced Timothy Grubb in his latter days to spend his evenings at a neighbouring public-house, cannot now be ascertained; but as he omitted to pay his reckonings, or, as it is termed, “ran up a score,” the said score bore conclusive evidence that he did not quit his own fire-side merely for the purpose of sitting idle. This formed a needless item in the widow’s embarrassments. When it was presented to her, she exclaimed vehemently against the amount, and waxed exceedingly wrathful, and, for the first time since she had put on her weeds, spake disrespectfully of the deceased, declaring that he ought to have been ashamed of himself.

The publican, however, was as obdurate as the rest of her tormentors, and after a while

they all met, and formed a sort of coalition for their general benefit; in furtherance of which the eating-house was disposed of, and, in spite of all Jemima Euphemia's oratory, she was obliged to decamp, taking with her a tolerable outfit in household furniture and two hundred pounds, which fell to her share in consequence of the activity and good management of those whom she styled her persecutors, because they insisted on disposing of the hot-joint concern while something could be obtained for the "good-will."

A few months after these events, Mrs. Grubb was comfortably settled in a convenient house, four stories high including the garrets, with a large room in front and a small one behind on each floor.

It is not necessary to let all the world know in what street it was situated, but it was in one of those which run from the Strand towards the Thames, and very eligible for letting lodgings, by the exercising of which craft the

widow proposed to make her way in life. She had contrived, with her remaining goods and chattels, and by attending sales and bargaining in Moorfields, to furnish the whole house very tidily, though not very fashionably; but that was of little consequence, as she proposed to have none but single gentlemen for her lodgers.

They, however, who are to get their living by supplying the wants of the public cannot always choose their customers; and so, after allowing her first floor to remain vacant during the winter, she let it, on very advantageous terms, to a milliner, who appeared highly pleased with it for the space of three months, at the end of which time the widow took the liberty of hinting to her that their agreement was for quarterly payments.

“Certainly, my dear Mrs. Grubb,” said the fair nymph; “I meant to have spoken to you to-morrow morning, when I shall have all ready for you. Isn’t this a charming dress?—it’s for a countess. I’m to take it home to-night at

ten o'clock, when she has promised to pay me for it and a great many other things she has had of me—she *never* disappoints me. So come and breakfast with me to-morrow morning, that 's a good soul, and we 'll settle everything; for I hate being in debt, and really you 've been so kind! You 're admiring my parrot, I see. ' Pretty Poll, what do the owls do?'"

" Fly by night," screamed the bird; and then, after chuckling a sort of laugh, flapped its wings and added, " Catch 'em who can!"

Mrs. Grubb admired the bird, not only because she felt herself bound in duty so to do, but because she had often envied its possessor the pleasure of having something to talk to, while she herself sat alone in her little back room on the ground-floor.

She little thought, at the moment, how soon and at what cost her envious wish would be gratified; but the next morning it appeared that the milliner had fled by night, and left pretty Poll to pay for the lodgings.

After this occurrence, our landlady's partiality for single gentlemen increased very considerably, particularly for such as kept good hours and were regular in their payments ; and her lodgers were all of that description save a French gentleman, who succeeded the milliner in the first floor, and he often stayed out late ; but then he kept his own servant, whose duty it was to sit up for him.

Matters went on thus very flourishingly with the widow ; her house was always full, and she had never, since the days of single blessedness, been so contented, and consequently so happy. It was pleasant to have no one to control her ; and moreover she felt not a little proud of the success of her speculation, as she had embarked in it contrary to the advice of her friends.

We are seldom better pleased with others than when we are on good terms with ourselves ; that is to say, not when we give way to ridiculous self-conceit, but when we are satisfied that our actions are worthy of appro-

bation, and are crowned with merited success. Thus it was with our widow. Those who had known her formerly, in stormier days, were astonished at the alteration. To be sure, she sometimes scolded her maid somewhat more than was absolutely necessary, and eased her mind by speaking very freely against the want of punctuality in her tradespeople; but these were old habits that did not interfere with the prosperity of her undertaking. To her lodgers she was civil and obliging, and both the house and its mistress were perfect patterns of neatness.

At the end of the first year, notwithstanding the expensive acquisition of her dear bird, she found that she had gained sufficient to pay for her outlay in furniture, the whole of which she declared to be quite as good, if not better, than new. Her inmates, too, appeared to be settled, as no one talked of moving, not even the French gentleman, whose valet gave her to understand that his master was become a per-

son of consequence, and attached to the embassy of his country.

Another quarter had thus nearly expired, and it was drawing towards Christmas, when her landlord called upon her one morning, and, after a great deal of hemming and haing, informed her that he was under the disagreeable necessity of raising her rent.

Jemima argued most eloquently against this monstrous proposition, and talked of the sums she had expended, the hardness of times, the difficulty which a lone woman had to make both ends meet, and so forth; but all was in vain, as the landlord's pithy reply was, "I can have a hundred a-year for it directly, if you were to leave it to-morrow; so why should I let you have it for eighty? One person's money's as good as another's; only, as you are in, I'll give you the preference—that's all fair and right." And having repeated these words some score of times, he went his way, giving the widow three days to come to a decision.

After consulting with friends, and finding she could do no better, she agreed to comply, provided the landlord would give her a written promise that she should have the option of purchasing his lease, at the expiration of the first year, for three hundred and fifty pounds.

To this, after some haggling, he consented; the document was made out, and the thriving widow returned home, resolved to raise the money somehow, "by hook or by crook," against the time specified.

"Then," said she, "I shall stand at only forty pounds a-year, and the house will be my own for upwards of ten years, besides the preference for a new lease; so I shall be beholden to nobody. And that's the way money makes money, they say. The new rent won't begin till Lady-day, so I've a year and a quarter to look about me in, and I'll take care not to spend a farthing that can be helped."

The next few days and nights were employed in devising and calculating on various ways

and means of increasing her profits, in order to effect the coveted purchase, which she flattered herself was to set her at ease for the remainder of her life.

It was a cold, dark, drizzling, comfortless Saturday night. She had sent her maid to Hungerford Market, to pick up something cheap for the morrow's dinner, and was sitting alone in her little back parlour, when, as the clock struck ten, she heard a strange knock at the door. It was not like that of any of her lodgers, nor of any one else she knew, being three distinct taps, neither so quick, so loud, nor so authoritative as those of the postman, who, by the way, gives but *two*, yet evidently given by some one who was determined to be heard, and to gain admittance.

Before the widow had time to put aside her work and attend to the summons, it was repeated.

"Heyday!" cried she, "you're in a precious hurry, whoever you are! I shouldn't wonder if it was a runaway. Where can that

hussy be staying? — she ought to have been back long ago. If it hadn't been such a night I'd have gone myself, though there is such a scrouging and noise with their 'What d'ye buy?'"

Saying these words, she issued forth into the passage, which was lighted dimly by a suspended lamp; but, before she could reach the door, the three taps were repeated for the third time.

"One would think it was his majesty!" cried she, wrathfully. "I'll put up the chain, however, for I don't like the looks of it;" and having so done, she turned the key, drew the door towards her, and asked "Who's there?"

"Is Mrs. Grubb at home?" exclaimed a shrill female voice.

"What do you want with her at this time o' night?" inquired the widow.

"I want to speak to her very particularly," was the reply. "Don't keep me waiting in the rain, pray, for I've no umbrella."

Mrs. Grubb forthwith removed the chain, and gave admittance to a little old lady, who instantly proceeded to the back room, sate herself down by the fireside, and began to warm her hands, as though she were at home.

The widow stared, but took her seat likewise, and said, "My name is Grubb, ma'am."

The stranger looked up, exhibiting a very odd-looking, long, shrivelled countenance, with a hooked nose, projecting chin, and small, dark, piercing eyes, the latter of which she fixed upon the widow in a very searching and disagreeable manner, without uttering a word. Her dress was of the fashion of some fifty years back, and over all she wore a dark-coloured loose cloak with a hood, which was drawn over her head, and was just sufficiently open in front to allow her features to be distinguished.

"Didn't you say you wanted to speak to me, ma'am?" inquired the landlady.

"Yes, I have something to say to you,

“Mrs. Grubb,” replied the little old lady. “You must know that I’ve taken a fancy to this house, and whenever I set my mind upon anything it’s not very easy to turn me from my purpose; so I hope you will agree to give it up at Lady-day, and then I’ll make you a present of twenty pounds.”

“If that’s all your business, ma’am,” said Mrs. Grubb, “it’s very soon settled; for I’m sure I shall do nothing of the kind.”

“You won’t, won’t you?” exclaimed the little lady, while her eyes seemed flashing with indignation; “You won’t, eh?—Do you know who I am?”

“No—nor I don’t care,” replied the widow. “But I’m not such a fool as you take me for, I can tell you that. Give up my house indeed, and nobody knows to whom or for why! I’ll tell you what, ma’am, I can’t fancy what could possess you to think of such a thing; but the sooner you take yourself out of it the better, if so be as that’s all you’ve got to say.”

“If you do not give up the house, you will repent of it,” said the stranger, in a hollow, sepulchral tone, which somewhat startled Mrs. Grubb, though she used to boast that she was born before nerves came into fashion.

She, however, replied, “I’m sure I should repent of it if I did.”

“You will repent! you will repent! you will repent!” said the little old woman.

“I sha’n’t! I sha’n’t! I sha’n’t!” cried Mrs. Grubb.

“Beware!” exclaimed the stranger.

“Be off!” ejaculated the widow.

“You are an obstinate woman,” said the little lady.

“Well, this is past all bearing!” cried Mrs. Grubb, “to be abused in one’s own house!”

“The house ought to be mine, and shall be mine,” said the old lady; “you’ll be glad enough to leave it before this time twelve-months.”

“That’s all you know about the matter,” quoth the widow, contemptuously.

“ You think your lodgers will stay with you,” said the stranger ; “ but they won’t—no——” Here she waved her lean arm about in an odd sort of way, and continued, “ No—no ! one will go to the west and another to the east—one here and one there ; and you will repent ! you will repent ! you will repent !”

“ You may be a witch for aught I know,” observed Mrs. Grubb ; “ but I’ll take my chance.”

At the mention of the term “ witch ” the little old woman grinned as if pleased, and replied, “ I’ve given you fair warning—your inmates will leave you.”

“ I pay the lodgings !” screamed the parrot, waking suddenly.

“ Yes,” continued the witch-like visiter, “ that bird speaks the truth ; before this day twelvemonths it will be your only lodger.”

“ Harkee, mum,” said the incensed widow, “ I an’t lived all these years to be scarified out o’ my seven senses by nobody knows who, about nobody knows what. It’s best for every-

body to mind their own business, and my lodgers are no concern of yours any how. Perhaps it mayn't be very polite of me in my own house, but I can't help saying, the sooner you're gone the better. I can't think what brought you here, and at this time o' night too."

"Fly by night!" cried the parrot, "he! he! he! Catch 'em who can!"

"Ay," observed the little old lady, laughing, "there are worse ways of travelling than that, so I shall take myself off. But first please to take notice, Mrs. Grubb, that I give you nine days to consider of my proposal—three times three days and nights, remember."

She then got up, wrapped her cloak about her, and walked out of the room, exclaiming, as she passed along the passage, "If you do not then agree to my proposal, you will repent! you will repent! you will repent!" and, while the last word was on her lip, she made her exit into the street, having opened the

door for herself without the smallest apparent effort.

“ A good riddance ! a good riddance ! a good riddance ! ” cried Mrs. Jemima, shutting the door after her visiter with a violence that shook the house. “ This is a pretty concern, to have warning given one by a mad woman ! for I look upon ’t that ’s what she is, if not something worse—though, for my part I don’t believe in witches, not I ! ”

“ Catch ’em who can ! ” screamed the parrot.

“ What should she know about my lodgers ? ” continued the widow, resuming her seat by the fireside : “ why, suppose even any of ’em was to leave me, I should soon get others. ”

“ I pay the lodgings ! ” cried Poll.

“ Hold your tongue, will you, you nasty bird ! ” exclaimed its mistress ; for, in spite of herself, what the little old lady had said left an unpleasant impression on her mind, and she was in no humour to be amused with anything.

“ What does she mean by nine days, I won-

der?—it will be a good many nines before I let her in again, I'll warrant. One to the east and one to the west—a pack o' nonsense! I can't think how I had patience to sit and listen to it, not I. A likely thing, indeed, that I should turn out of house and home for twenty pounds, when I hope to make a good two hundred before the year is out! But, bless my heart, where *can* that hussy be staying? it's more than half-past ten! And Mr. Jenkins too, him as is so regular always at ten, he an't come in neither! And there's only that French wally, as they call him, in the house, and he wouldn't answer the bell nor the knocker if the house was a-fire; though, to be sure, it'd be of no great use if he did, as he can't speak to be understood by any Christian."

When Betty at length made her appearance with a neck of mutton, her purchase was very far from giving satisfaction; there was too much bone, and Mrs. Grubb was sure it would look as yellow as a sovereign by day-

light; the price, moreover, was pronounced to be extravagant.

Now Betty was a peaceable, hard-working, contented damsel enough, and had hitherto never taken upon herself to reply to her mistress when in a scolding humour; but, on the present occasion, her tone was marvellously changed, for she observed, with an air of easy nonchalance, "It's a pity you didn't go to market yourself."

"What do you say?" exclaimed the angry widow; "is that the way you answer me?"

"Yes," said Betty, with provoking coolness, "I'm sure I do all I can; but there's no pleasing you any how, and I'm sick and tired of trying, and that's the truth."

"You're an impudent hussy to tell me so," cried Mrs. Grubb; "so get along with you, do. I've a great mind to send you about your business, that's what I have."

"I'm sure I've no objection to go directly, for the matter of that," replied Betty; "but

as we agreed for a month's warning, please to observe that I give you warning to-day." And so saying, she took up the bony neck of mutton and went her way, leaving her mistress with a considerable degree of astonishment and indignation superadded to her previous ill-humour.

After a little reflection, however, the widow became calmer; for she fancied that she perceived a considerable advantage to herself from Betty's folly. "Yes," thought she, "I give her eight guineas a-year, and she gets I don't know what from the lodgers. I see it all now—that's what she's been stopping for till now; she hopes to get the Christmas-boxes, the wiper! but I'll stop 'em for the next as comes, instead of wages. When I was in the eating line, we never paid a farden wages, but made the head-waiter come down something for his place; and I don't see why it shouldn't be so in a lodging-house."

This admirable economical expedient deprived her of half an hour's rest that night,

and interfered somewhat more extensively with her devotions on the following day ; so that by Monday morning her plan was maturely digested, and she went forth to make her want known in the neighbourhood. Her desire was, she said, to meet with a strong, active girl or woman, if from the country all the better. “ I say nothing about wages,” she added, “ because there’s no end to what single gentlemen give servants, and my lodgers are *very* generous and the house *always* full.”

In spite of these splendid representations, however, the various applicants objected to the clause of having no settled wages to depend upon, though several were willing to engage at half-price, and trust to the lodgers for the remainder ; but this proposition made the widow yet more stubborn in her purpose, as it convinced her that she had thrown away four guineas during the preceding year.

When the week had passed in this uncertainty, she resolved to consult some of her

ancient gossips in the neighbourhood of the "hot joint" concern; and so on the Monday morning was making her way along Fleet Street, when she felt herself twitched by the elbow, and, turning round, was surprised to find herself in the presence of the little old lady, who briefly said, "Nine days are past."

"I've nothing to say to you, mum," replied the widow. "Do pray let go my gown; you'll tear it."

"Never mind, I'll buy you another," replied the little lady; "yes, silk or satin, whichever you like, besides the twenty pounds, if you'll let me have the house; if not, you will repent! repent! repent!"

"I won't! I won't! I won't!" exclaimed Mrs. Grubb; "so there's your answer, answer, answer, since that's your way of talking."

"A hundred a-year rent, besides taxes," said the old lady. "Your maid has given you warning; you won't get such another. One of your lodgers will give you warning

next; you won't get such another. Then a second—then a third; you will be in your house alone! alone! alone! You will repent! repent! repent! and you will think of me! me! me! And as for your second-hand furniture—But I have told you enough! enough! enough!”

“Then brush! brush! brush!” exclaimed Mrs. Grubb, “and don't gather a crowd about us. I tell you I have nothing to say to you. Let me go, will you? if you don't, I'll call out for a constable.”

“You will repent! repent! repent!” cried the little lady; and the instant after she was lost in the midst of the passing throng.

This incident somewhat ruffled Mrs. Grubb's serenity; but, shaking her gown, and looking to see if it was torn by the mad woman, she proceeded on her way, muttering, “I don't believe in witches, not I; and yet how came she to know that Betty had given me warning, I wonder? As for what she says about a

lodger, that's all nonsense, for they're all fixed where they are, though I mean to raise 'em all a little, or I sha'n't be able to buy the lease. And my furniture too! as if it wasn't all as good as new!—I've no patience with her impudence."

On reaching her old neighbourhood and making known her business, she had the satisfaction of being introduced to a young woman just arrived from the country, who, rather than remain longer out of place, was glad to accept the proffer made. She was very uncouth in manners and appearance, but then she was very strong, and totally unacquainted with London and its ways; and the two latter were, in Mrs. Grubb's opinion, sufficient recommendations to compensate for the want of polish. So Margery was duly engaged.

CHAPTER II.

HAVING contrived a saving of eight guineas per annum in the kitchen-department, the widow resolved, in the next place, to increase her income by an advance in the rents of her lodgers, and to begin with the French gentleman. Her reasons for giving him the precedence were, his having obtained a place under Government, which, she doubted not, brought him in a great deal of money; and the idea that, when she had carried her point with him, her English inmates would be more easily managed, and would feel ashamed of being outdone in liberality by a foreigner.

Having dressed herself for the occasion, she waited upon Monsieur Morvanchet, who re-

ceived her very politely, and requested her to take a seat. So she sate herself down, and, with great volubility, related various passages in her life; spake of the death of her beloved Timothy with much pathos, and talked of other and more serious losses and persecutions which she had endured; and, withal, described herself as being a lone woman, having nobody but herself to help her to make her way through the world. Now, the person to whom she addressed this moving discourse, had made but an indifferent use of his opportunities of perfecting himself in the English language, and, consequently, often was at a loss when spoken to with a rapid flow of words. It was his custom, in such cases, to make a rough guess at the general tenour of what he heard, so all he could comprehend of Jemima Euphemia's oratory appeared to him to announce, that the purport of her visit was to complain to him of the loneliness and uncomfortableness of a state of widowhood. This might, possi-

bly, be gratifying to his vanity, but it was perplexing, as, notwithstanding the similarity of their ages, he felt that he could not bestow even his transitory affections upon the fair complainant. Nevertheless, his natural gallantry suggested to him that he ought to say something for her consolation; so he replied:—

“ Oh ! Madame Grope, dat is all noting. What for you keep a widow, when so many shall shump to have you ? You got de good house, all proper. If I am you I will marry myself to-morrow. He, he ! What you say ? Is he not so ? ”

“ La ! sir,” said Jemima Euphemia, smiling graciously, “ how you talk ! Oh no ; I shall never marry any more ! ” and she heaved a sigh.

“ Dat is cruel,” observed Monsieur Morvanchet.

“ Ah ! sir ; when one has had one good husband ! ” sighed the widow.

“ Miss him very moch, perhaps ? ” said the

lodger : “ most get anoder ; no oder way. Bot you most excuse me ; I have some business what calls for me in de oder end of de town ; so I most go. But we shall talk over de widow business anoder time, and I shall do more possible to persuade you.”

“ But I have not told you what I came about !” exclaimed Mrs. Grubb. “ However, sir, if you are in a hurry now, I will wait upon you when you come back ?”

As Monsieur had no wish for a second *tête-à-tête*, he replied :—

“ No, no, madame ; speak your sentiment now ; de lady alway come first. De business will not press.”

The widow hereupon told him, somewhat at length, of the manner in which her hard-hearted landlord had taken advantage of her being a lone woman and raised her rent, and concluded by saying : “ You know, sir, I told you, when you first came, that these two rooms and one for your servant up-stairs were well

worth three guineas a-week, furnished as they are, and you know you only pay me two. But I don't want to be hard upon any gentleman : all I want is, to make both ends meet ; and so, as my rent is raised, I hope you won't object to pay half-a-guinea more ?”

“ Eh ! what !” exclaimed the Frenchman, “ you exige anoder half-guinea ? No, no ; dey not come in my hand so soon. I not understand what you mean by ‘ bot your ends,’ and ‘ be hard,’ but I not pay no more. I give you now so much as two tousand six hundred and some franc for de year, what shall suffice in my country for de grand chateau, wid all his furniture, and garden and vineyard ; and all I have is dis room, wid the chamber in de back, and little hole up in de tiles for Louis. No, no ; I give no more.”

“ But only think, sir,” observed the widow ; “ how am I to make up the difference, if you don't ?”

“ You make up what you can,” was the

reply ; “ I make up my mind—I not pay no more. Make de fat gentleman what live down stair, pay you. He never go to de theatres, nor nowhere. Money of no use to him. Al-lons ! It is arranged—I most go at de oder end of de town,” and he rang the bell for Louis.

“ Well, sir, you ’ll think of it,” said Mrs. Grubb ; “ I ’m sure such a gentleman as you wou’dn’t like to distress a widow.”

“ No, no,” replied Monsieur Morvanchet, “ I not distress no widow ; but you make good affairs. You are very well, Madame Grope ; not look like distress. Most not be too fond of de money, what make himself some wings and fly away like noting. But where de devil is Louis, as he not come for de bell ?”

Saying the last words, he opened the parlour door, and, at the instant, a loud squall was heard from the kitchen ; upon which Mrs. Grubb bustled off to see what was the matter, and on her way met Louis^o coming up stairs,

evidently in a violent passion, and muttering something in French, which was, of course, unintelligible to her.

“What in the world is the matter now?” she exclaimed, entering the kitchen; “one would think the house was a-fire!”

“La! missus,” replied Margery, “I’m sure I don’t know why I screeched out; it come natural somehow. I a’n’t to be frighted by a whipper-snapper of a Frenchman. I’ve tackled chaps a pretty sight stronger nor he afore now.”

“I insist upon knowing all about it,” said her mistress. “I’ll have no romping with the men in my house.”

“I’m sure I don’t want to romp,” replied Margery sulkily; “but what business had he to take my pot off the fire, to make room for some of his own messes, I should like to know?”

This was the substance of her defence; but the truth was, that the uncouthness and levity

of her manners had led Louis to suppose that she would be an easy conquest, and he had taken the said liberty with her fire, for the purpose of getting up an amatory scuffle. In this he succeeded perfectly to his satisfaction for some time, as Margery, contrary to her own assertion, had a predilection for romping ; but she was unused to practise the said art with valets dressed in frilled shirts, and so, when Louis proceeded to certain freedoms, which she did not choose to permit, she uttered the before-mentioned alarming shriek, and at the same instant, his best cambric went to wreck.

“ C’est une veritable tigresse ! ” said he, looking with dismay upon his tatters. The passion of anger succeeded to that of love, and he went to attend his master, with whom he lodged a complaint against “ la belle sauvage ” who had recently come to inhabit the lower regions. Now, Monsieur Morvanchet was a quiet, easily contented person, and one very desirable to be retained as a lodger ; but his income was limit-

ed, and he knew that he could not pay the additional half-guinea per week without depriving himself of certain amusements, which habit had rendered almost necessary for his comfort. The proposition of the widow, therefore, set him a-thinking, and he communicated his thoughts to Louis, of whose integrity and attachment he had the highest opinion.

“ I have no wish,” said he, (speaking, of course, in French,) “ to leave these lodgings. They are at a convenient distance from the theatres, and the restaurateurs, where I usually dine ; but an additional twenty-six guineas, that is very nearly seven hundred francs ! truly, I cannot think of paying such a sum. So, my good friend, you know the town pretty well now, just go and look about you.”

Had this commission been given to Louis while Mrs. Grubb’s former maid lived with her, he would have endeavoured to have persuaded his master not to move, for Betty was a kind-hearted person, and pitied him as a

stranger in a strange land. To be sure, there had been no love-making, but they were good friends. She instructed him in the English language, and in return he assisted her, in every possible way, in her duties, save that of attending at the street-door, where his mode of expressing himself had subjected himself and others to embarrassment. But those days were past. Betty was gone, and Margery was out of favour ; so he sallied forth to look for lodgings with alacrity, while his master resolved to spend the rest of the day from home, in order that he might not be exposed to another visit from his landlady till he should have it in his power to speak decidedly of his future intentions.

“ I shall talk him into it,” said Mrs. Grubb to herself. “ But, let the worst come to the worst, we can but divide the difference. However, I know I shall talk him into it, for he’s a real gentleman, although he is a Frenchman.”

This favourable opinion was, perhaps, the

result of Monsieur's gallant observations on the article of marriage; but, before the day was at an end, she had come to the resolution that, rather than part with so good a lodger, she would allow matters to stand as they were for a few weeks, in order to "bring him round" by increased attention and civility. So she gave Margery what she called "a good set-down," and ordered her to allow the "wally" a free use of the fire, and not to "screech" out about nothing; and went herself to see that all was right and tidy in the first-floor; and, having performed these duties, went to bed, to dream of the increase in her income.

On the following morning, after breakfast, Monsieur Morvanchet went out in a hackney-coach, his valet riding on the box with the driver.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Grubb, who had attended him to the door, "that looks respectable! I dare say he's gone to call upon some great man. There's neither of my neighbours has

got lodgers as keeps wallies. I'm glad Mr. Jenkins was at home to see 'em, for, though he can't afford to keep a servant himself, he has plenty of Welsh pride about him, and won't go to throw himself out here for the sake of five shillings a week, to lodge with nobody knows who."

"The fat man in the parlour wants to speak to ye," said Margery, loud enough to be heard by the individual of whom she spoke.

"What d'ye mean by that, you hussy?" cried the widow. "Is that the way to speak of a gentleman? Why don't you say, Mr. Jenkins?"

"For the matter o' that, you knows who I means," replied Margery, "so there's no bones broke this time; but I can't stop to argufy about it now, for there's the chap as sleeps over the Frenchman's been ringing and bawling for hot water, and I ha'n't got a drop, as you said I were to let the wally have his own way, and he's emptied the biler, and it won't bile again for this hour!"

“Just as if I’d nothing but a biler in the house!” exclaimed the enraged mistress. “Get along with ye, do! and put a tin pot upon the fire this instant!”

Having thus provided for the immediate necessities of the unshaven gentleman up aloft, Mrs. Grubb shook out the folds of her gown, and proceeded to wait upon Mr. Jenkins, of whom it will be necessary to say a few words.

In his earlier years he had been engaged in the bookselling trade, and report states him to have been more given to reading than was perfectly consistent with his interest; but, subsequently, he had given up his business, upon obtaining a clerkship in one of the public offices at Somerset House, and from that period he attended his duties there with laudable punctuality in the morning, and spent the remainder of his time in the manner most agreeable to himself. In this tranquil, monotonous sort of life he had attained his sixtieth year, gradually becoming fatter and fatter; but with the increase in his bulk he acquired a good-humoured

placidity, or, perhaps, more correctly speaking, lethargic habits, which rendered him an exceedingly desirable single gentleman as a lodger.

Mrs. Grubb described him as being "as quiet as a mouse." Unless it was for a supply of coals, his bell was never heard to tingle. No one called upon him, though he, occasionally, brought home friends with him, who were as peaceable as himself. At the termination of every quarter he punctually discharged all his pecuniary obligations to the widow, and hitherto there had not been the most trivial complaint. He appeared to be settled and contented; and the fatigue and trouble which he had undergone when "moving in" to her house, in arranging his bookcases and their ponderous contents, made her conclude that he would not move out again for the sake of a trifle. But all Mr. Jenkins's inertness was the result of habit. It was difficult to arouse him. He would put up with many inconveniences rather than give himself the trouble of complaining, but, when he was

excited, the Cambrian blood would show itself most decidedly.

“ Good morning to you, sir,” said Mrs. Grubb, entering the room.

“ Good morning to you, madam,” said the stout gentleman in return ; “ pray take a seat. I wanted to speak to you—where in the world did you catch that new servant of yours ?”

“ She comes from the country, sir,” replied the widow, somewhat startled at the look and unwonted vehemence of her mouse-like inmate. “ She is a poor girl, sir, without friends, and I took her from charity.”

“ Humph !” observed Mr. Jenkins ; “ charity is all very well in its way, but look ye, madam, she is a nasty, dirty, slovenly, lazy—I don’t know what to call her. I don’t believe my bed has been made for this week, and, unless she has been stuffing it with potatoes, I can’t think what she’s done with it. And everything in the room, madam, filthy—down-right abomination !”

Mrs. Grubb expressed her regret, and pro-

mised to set all to rights herself; and added, that Margery was strong and willing to work, and she had no doubt would very soon make a very good servant.

“ May be, may be,” said Mr. Jenkins; “ but, in the mean time—well, well, I’m not fond of finding fault, you know; I don’t like her, however, and that’s the truth. What in the world possessed you to part with Betty? she was something like a servant. You should have let well alone, madam. I hate changes of all sorts—new faces—new places—everything of the kind.”

“ So much the better,” thought the widow, as she replied that Betty had given her warning, and really good servants were very scarce.

After a few more vituperations against changes and the unfortunate Margery, the Cambrian seemed to have digested “ the venom of his spleen,” and, as if to make amends for previous violence, conversed with more than his wonted suavity, and told his landlady

that it was far from his wish to embarrass her, that he had had every reason to be satisfied hitherto with her attention to his comforts, and had no objection to put up with some little inconveniences for a short time, provided that his bed was properly made.

“ Don’t let me be deprived of my rest,” said he, good-humouredly ; “ and then for other trifles I am not particular, especially with a widow-lady.”

“ Yes,” observed Mrs. Grubb, “ it is a hard thing for a lone woman——”

“ Exactly so,” said Mr. Jenkins, interrupting her for fear of a repetition ; “ if you recollect, you informed me how you were situated. But things have gone on well since ; you have got your house full, and so you must not complain.”

“ I ain’t one o’ them as complains without cause,” said the widow ; “ but I ha’n’t had an opportunity of speaking to you before, sir, or I should have told you about my landlord as has riz my rent. That’s the way ; whenever

a lone woman begins to get her head above water, they comes and takes advantage of one."

"Eh? how 's that?" exclaimed Mr. Jenkins; "why did you not tell me before? perhaps I might have done something for you."

"You're very good, sir," continued Mrs. Grubb; "but I didn't like to trouble you, as I know you don't like to be disturbed."

"Well, well, that was very considerate of you," observed her lodger; "however, tell me all about it now, for I know something of your landlord, and will speak to him on the subject."

The widow hereupon retold her tale, by which it clearly appeared to Mr. Jenkins that his offer of interference came too late; but, to her great surprise, he anticipated the request which she would hardly have ventured to make to him that morning.

"Look ye, my good madam," said he, "what's done can't be undone. I wish you had spoken to me before; but as it is, we must,

all of us that are in the house, lend you a helping hand, so, as I'm the oldest, I'll set the rest an example. I give you a guinea and a half a week for my two rooms—well, well, make it five-and-thirty shillings for this next year; that will be three and six-pence a week, or nine pounds two shillings the year; pretty near half the advance in your rent, you see. At the end of the year we must come back to the old terms again, as between this and then you'll be able to look about you, and I dare say will raise the money for the lease. But we can talk about that another time; I must go to the office now, as it is getting late. There, there don't thank me—you're very welcome; it is no more than our duty to help one another. Only mind and have my bed properly made, that's a good soul; I don't think I'd half an hour's sound sleep last night."

When he was gone, Mrs. Grubb blamed herself exceedingly for not having spoken out, and asked for the five-shilling increase, which she

had no doubt he would have agreed to; but solaced herself with the reflection that she could speak to him another day, and that she had now made a positive beginning in her intended increase of income.

“Eight guineas in the kitchen,” said she, “and nine pounds here; that is seventeen pound ten that I fooled away last year. Why if, after all, I ’m obliged to divide the difference with the Frenchman, that ’ll be”—here she sat down to calculate—“that ’ll be thirteen guineas and seventeen pound odd; more than thirty pounds. And then there’s the up-stairs folks—but I think Mounseer Mufflncheat will come down the half-guinea; if he don’t, I know he ought to be ashamed of himself. And that ’ll make between forty and fifty pound; pretty near as good as if I ’d another room, and no furniture to buy neither!”

After this castle-building soliloquy, she went and administered to Margery the diurnal scolding, by virtue whereof she was in time to be

metamorphosed into an excellent servant. A second edition followed, on the inspection of the fat gentleman's bed, and so both mistress and maid were in excessive ill-humour when Monsieur Morvanchet and Louis returned in high spirits, each of them singing alternately scraps of French tunes as they ascended the staircase.

“Monsieur want to speak wid you, Madame Grope,” said the valet to our widow, after they had been in the house about ten minutes, and there was a singular sort of grin on his countenance which puzzled her.

When she entered his room, Monsieur was walking, or rather pacing to and fro therein, after the fashion of a dancing-master, humming a lively air; and moreover, as his back was towards the door at the moment, he did not perceive her till he had cut a caper or two in turning round.

“Good morning, sir,” said Mrs. Grubb, assuming her most amiable smile; “am glad to see you in such good spirits.”

“ Oh ! yes, my spirit very good,” he replied. “ Allons ! sit you down—take de shair. Ah ! Missis Grope, you make de money like de dirt : I shall like to peep in your pocket, Madame Grope.”

“ La, sir !” exclaimed the widow.

“ Ah, ha !” continued her lodger, “ I shall see something if I do. But never mind—you open my eyes ; ver mosh oblige to you for dat—shall know noting else. Go on here else, de week after de mont and de year, two guinea—two guinea—never no end ! Ver stupide, dat ; but I am tranquille, and not tink of de shanges. Bot, you tell me yesterday, he is wort tree guinea ! ver well, so mosh de better is for you when you got him ; for I find de apartment what shall do all so good for me and Louis for de one guinea and half, wid some more mosh of de light. Ah ! you see ?—ver mosh oblige to you, Madame Grope.”

“ La ! sir,” cried Mrs. Grubb, “ surely you don’t mean to leave me ? I’m sure I’ve done

everything in my power to make you comfortable."

"Oh! yes, Madame Grope," replied Monsieur, "I not say de contraire; bot the guinea more comfortable in my pocket as what you can do wid me. So I go live by Leicester Square, where I am so well for de teatre as here, and better for de dinner; and you let dis appartement to one English richard for de tree guinea you speak of as he is wort."

"La! sir," exclaimed Mrs. Grubb, "I hope you won't do nothing percipatedly; I'm sure I should be sorry to part, and if we talks the matter over a bit, I dare say we sha'n't fall out."

"Dere is no fall out in de case," replied Monsieur—"I go out, dat is all. I speaked de oder lodging dis morning—go in next week, all proper: no more two guinea—I go at the opera in the stead."

Of course, under such circumstances, the remainder of the widow's oratory was exerted in

vain, and during the rest of that day she was even more than usually severe with poor Margery, to whose rudeness towards Louis she thought fit to attribute this first disarrangement of her calculations.

At the appointed time, Monsieur Morvan-chet took his departure, and Mrs. Grubb had the mortification to witness daily an empty first floor, with a bill stuck in the window. This was bad enough; but, in addition, her lodger who occupied a bed-room on the second floor took it into his head to complain of the lack of hot water, and to hint that, if a due supply thereof was not forthcoming in future, he should shift his quarters. Therefore the shrewd widow conceived that it would be impolitic to propose the advance of rent to him till she had made him comfortable, and if hot water could have that effect, she resolved that he should have sufficient.

The individual who slept in the back-room even with her own, on the third floor, was shopman to a linendraper in the Strand. He went

out early, and came home regularly at ten, when he went to bed fatigued, and, as he boarded with his master and shaved with cold water, was altogether a desirable lodger in his way, though he paid only half a guinea a-week. This sum Mrs. Grubb proposed to raise to twelve shillings, hinting that the chamber was well worth fifteen.

“ My only reason for preferring your house, ma'am,” said the linendraper, “ is, because it is near the shop, and is respectable in appearance; but my employer allows me only twenty-five pounds a-year for lodging out, and so I am out of pocket as it is.”

The widow hereupon observed, that she did not wish to take advantage of anybody's poverty, and so she supposed that matters must remain for the present as they were. And this she spake not unadvisedly, for she calculated that it would arouse his pride; and truly it had that effect, though the result was not, as she anticipated, a compliance with her desire.

CHAPTER III.

THE unsightly bill remained in the first-floor window for three months, and then the linendraper gave up his bed-room, without considering any explanation necessary for leaving lodgings where it appeared to him that he was merely tolerated on account of his poverty, till some one could be found willing and able to give a higher price. But the spring was advancing, and the widow kept up her spirits as well as she could with the hope of letting her lodgings to some of the country gentlemen who then usually come to town. One or two had already looked at the rooms, and promised to call again, although, in order to make up for her losses, she had now advanced the

terms of the first floor and servant's room aloft, to three guineas and a-half.

Matters were in this state when, one morning, she read in the newspapers an advertisement requiring apartments for a single lady and her servant in the neighbourhood of the Strand. "I did say that I wouldn't have anything to do with ladies," muttered the widow, "but then, if she has her own servant, perhaps she'll take the room on the third floor, too. However, there can't be any harm in knowing what kind of person she is; they aren't all like the milliner, it is to be hoped. I don't want any more parrots at that price: it's enough to drive one crazy to think of it! I hate the sight of the bird. Well, it's no use talking about that now, so I'll put on my bonnet, and just step as far as Soho Square, and see what kind of a concern it is as advertises.

On reaching the house at which application was to be made, she found it altogether unob-

jectionable in appearance, so she rang the bell, and the door was opened by a servant in livery. "If you 'll walk in and sit down, ma'am," said he, on learning her business, "the lady will speak to you directly, I'm sure, as she is very anxious to find lodgings."

"All the better," thought the widow. "If that's the case, I shan't let mine for an old song, as there's no others to let in our street now, more shame for them as took the rest and left a lone woman's empty;" and though alone, she heaved an habitual sigh, according to her custom whenever she spoke of her widowhood—though it is much to be questioned whether the revivification of her Timothy would have been an agreeable surprise. After waiting about twenty minutes, she was beginning to be impatient, when the parlour-door was opened, and she could scarcely believe her eyes on perceiving in the person who walked in the said identical little old lady who had visited her in the winter, and so strangely accosted

her in the street. "Oho! Mrs. Grubb," she exclaimed, "it is you, is it?"

"Well, well, sit down; so you've thought better of what I told you, eh? I knew how it would be. You'll let me have the house now, I suppose?"

"No, indeed, I sha'n't do any such thing, mum," replied Jemima Euphemia; "you advertised for apartments, and I happen to have some to let just now; but, to tell you a bit of my mind, I don't think as you'll suit me exactly, and so there's no need to say no more about the matter."

"I must have the house! — I *will* have the house!" said the little lady, waving her arm, as in their former interview. "Your lodgers will all leave you; two are gone, another is going, and the last will soon follow, and you will repent—you will repent—you will repent."

"I didn't come here to ax your advice, mum," said the widow, rising, "so you'd best keep it for them as wants it. It ain't of no

use for you to pretend to scarify me ; I know which side my bread 's buttered on better than you, anyhow."

" Do not imagine that you can deceive *me*," retorted the old lady, " I know all — I know all — I know all ! Your ground-floor lodger, Mr. Jenkins, pays you thirty-five shillings, and your third-floor lodger one guinea a-week ; that is two pounds sixteen, or a hundred and forty-five pounds twelve shillings a-year, which is all you receive towards paying your rent, taxes, wear and tear of furniture, washing, and so forth. Even if they were both to continue with you, all that you saved last year would be sunk before this is over ; but one will leave you before the present quarter is ended, and you will repent — you will repent — you will repent."

During this denouncement Mrs. Grubb was hastily retreating, and, as the last words were uttered, she made her escape out at the street-door, which she banged violently after her,

muttering something about its being a shame to allow mad people to be at liberty. On her way home, however, she began to entertain great doubts whether any other person than a witch could be so minutely acquainted with the state of her affairs. The mention of the rent paid by Mr. Jenkins was particularly extraordinary, as she could not recollect having told anybody. Then she thought of the former prophecy, foretelling that one of her lodgers should go to the west and one to the east. Monsieur Morvanchet had removed to Leicester Square, which was to the west; and the linendraper's new lodgings lay precisely to the east. "Phoo!" said she to herself, endeavouring to get rid of certain uncomfortable feelings, "it's all nonsense about witchcraft and all that; I don't believe in nothing of the kind, not I. It would have been very strange if they'd both gone the same way; and when people move, they must go to one side or the other: they can't move and stop

in the same place at the same time, that's clear enough."

She arrived at this philosophical conclusion as she knocked at her own door, which was instantly opened by a very genteelly-dressed man, who, in a loud voice, as if speaking to some inside the house, said — "Don't trouble yourself! I've found them;" and then, politely touching his hat to the widow, stepped nimbly past, leaving the door open for her accommodation. This civility she very courteously returned, and entered, supposing him to be a visiter to her second-floor lodger, who was an officer on half-pay. Just as she had seated herself in her little back parlour, Margery came leaping down the stairs two at a time, exclaiming — "I can't see nothing o' your gloves, and am pretty sartin as you put 'em in your pocket! La! he beant here!"

"What's all this noise about?" cried the widow.

"La! missus," continued Margery—"what!

be you here? Didn't you see the gentleman as come after the lodgings? He wanted to speak to you very particklar about 'em, and I'm pretty sure he'll take 'em, as he didn't make no kind of objections, and I told him the price and all——"

"Don't stop chattering here, then," exclaimed Mrs. Grubb; "but run out, and see if you can't catch him: he went towards the Strand."

Accordingly Margery bounced out into the street, and ran in the direction indicated, screaming out that her mistress was come home. But as the gentleman was not to be seen, she soon returned, as she now knew enough of London to be aware that it was useless to inquire of passengers in the Strand if they had not seen a gentleman go by in a brown coat—"I'm sure he'll call again, mum," she said. "He seemed to like the lodgings very much, and said he'd a sarvent of his own, and so shouldn't give no trouble at all; but, howsom-

ever, he always made it a pint to give summut handsome to the sarvent of the house."

Here it may be as well to mention, that whenever it fell to Margery's lot to show the lodgings, she always took care to inform the inquirers that she received no wages, though she "worked as hard as a nigger!" a piece of intelligence little likely to prepossess them in favour of the establishment.

Now the stranger's polite demeanour as he passed her, had made a favourable impression on Jemima Euphemia; and though vexed that she had not spoken to him, she was of Margery's opinion that he would be sure to call again: so, for the space of an hour, matters went on with unusual smoothness between mistress and maid; but then an unpleasant discovery was made: the former, for fear of pick-pockets, had left her watch hanging above the chimney-piece when she went out, and it was now nowhere to be found. The real character of the promising, polite gentleman was too ap-

parent. He had sent the unsuspecting Margery up-stairs to look after his gloves, and had adroitly availed himself of her absence. Loud and vehement were the expressions of the widow's wrath and indignation ; she cried and scolded by turns, and then contrived to do both at one and the same time. "Didn't I tell you," she exclaimed — " Didn't I tell you never to leave nobody alone on no account whatsoever? If I hadn't come home just at the critical moment, he'd ha' stripped the house, that's what he would. Oh, you stupid hussy ! what *shall* I do? The watch as belonged to my poor dear husband as is dead and gone ! Pretty near the only thing as I ever had to remember him by ! But that's the way ! — a lone woman is subjugated to all kinds o' disasters. I've a great mind to make you pay for the watch, that's what I have !"

This threat, for the strongest of all possible reasons, was not very formidable to Margery ; but the gentleman had likewise been very po-

lite to her, and she was shocked at the idea of having been so wheedled by a thief, so, instead of attempting any defence, she sat down and blubbered by the side of her mistress.

Misfortunes, they say, never come singly. In the middle of the succeeding night, Mr. Jenkins's bed broke down with him. It was one which the widow had bought cheap, but she declared it was quite as good as new: however, when the broken parts were examined, it appeared marvellous that they had so long held together beneath their nocturnal burden. The stout gentleman swore, very distinctly and positively, that he would never trust himself upon it again; so nothing remained but to "accommodate" him with the bed from the first floor, and to vamp up the other, and hope that the next in-comer might be a person of light weight.

For several weeks after this disaster, nothing particular occurred to vary the disagreeable monotony of Mrs. Grubb's manner of living. She

had comforted herself for a while by repeating at times the old adage, that “an empty house is better than a bad tenant;” but, when another quarter was on the wane, she began to be of a different opinion, and would often say, “Half a loaf is better than no bread.” So she resolved to be more moderate in her demands, and to ask only two guineas for her first floor, and to take even a guinea and a half, rather than allow an opportunity of letting it to slip by. But the season was too far advanced; it was now the month of June, and people were leaving town for the country. She had great expectations from the exhibition of paintings at Somerset House, and about the time of its opening several persons called and looked at her apartments, and generally promised to call again; yet somehow it happened that none of them performed their promise, although she always endeavoured to excite their interest by stating that she was a widow, and how hard it was for a lone woman to make both ends meet.

Perhaps she might have spoken somewhat too much at length for the fastidious taste of some, as it is not every single gentleman that likes a talkative landlady; and moreover it may be questioned whether a multitude of complaints is the most attractive method of inducing strangers to come and take up their abode in a house. Most people, it is to be feared, have troubles enough of their own; but Jemima Euphemia, like many more, spake of hers as if they must be more interesting than any others in the world, not merely to herself, but to every one else.

In the midst of all her disappointments, however, she had one secret source of exultation; the quarter was drawing to a close, and both her lodgers remained with her, contrary to the prophecy of the little old lady, of whom she thought much more than she wished. Perhaps Margery was inadvertently the cause of certain unpleasant doubts, as she frequently averred that she verily believed the house was bewitched, since nobody would take the lodgings.

“ I don’t believe in any such nonsense,” said her mistress ; but still she felt that she should be more at ease in her mind when the quarter-day was past, as then the charm, if any existed, would be proved to be at an end.

The last week had commenced ; Monday passed in tranquillity, and Wednesday was the important day.

“ Well,” said the widow, “ it would be strange indeed if either Mr. Jenkins or the captain should go off at an hour’s notice ! No, no—all’s safe enough now. I can’t conceive how I could be so silly as to think anything of what a mad woman says ; howsomever, let’s have to-morrow over, and then there’ll be an end o’ that nonsense.”

Tuesday morning arrived. Mr. Jenkins went as usual to his office, and about one o’clock Captain Brown descended from the second floor, and condescended to accost his landlady, *en passant*, with more than usual urbanity ; for he was of the stiff-necked race of

dandies who delight much in “Ahs” and “Ohs,” and keeping their bodies tightly buttoned up and erect.

“Happy t’ tell ye, ma’m, t’ y’r new suvvent impooves,” said he.

“Oh! yes,” observed Mrs. Grubb, “I knew she’d do very well; all as she wanted was brushing up a bit, for she’s very willing to larn, for the matter o’ that, and very strong.”

“Oh—ah—ye-es, ma’m,” replied the captain, hoisting his cravat—“yes, ve-ey strong. Wish ’e good mon’ ’um: peaps ur may b’ late t’ night, as ’m invi—ited out to a—a dinner. Good mon’, Missis Gup;” and he went his way.

Having closed the door after him, the widow descended with unusual complacency to the kitchen, to inspect the taking up of a roasted duck sent to her from the country. It was done “to a turn,” and the green peas were excellent, and Margery being in high favour at the moment, was invited to sit down and partake of it. Moreover, as good eating de-

serves good drinking," the table was graced with a pewter pint full of porter, and both mistress and maid were still enjoying themselves, when Mr. Jenkins returned a full hour before his usual time.

When Margery had let him in and returned to the kitchen to finish her luxurious repast, she expressed her surprise how anybody could like to sit moping over a parcel of books for so many hours as the fat gentleman did, when he might go walking about town, and see all that was to be seen.

" Ah !" said the widow, " he's got books enow to set up a shop, for the matter o' that ; if they was mine, I 'd soon turn 'em into money, and not let 'em stand there, from month's end to month's end, eating their heads off."

" I can't think what the plague they're all about," observed Margery ; " I see'd a history o' the whole world once, and it warn't a bit bigger than some o' them whappers as stands all of a row on the lower shilves."

“He’s always buying new uns, too,” said the mistress, “as if he hadn’t got more already than he knew what to do with. Such a plague as there was with ’em when he came first! it was pretty nigh a fortnight afore he’d got ’em all in order, as he called it. I don’t think he’ll be in a hurry to have another such a job, that’s one comfort, for he went puffing and blowing about as red as a turkey-cock, and had pretty well knocked himself up.”

This disquisition on the folly of literary pursuits was here suddenly cut short by a violent ringing of the bibliomaniac’s bell.

“Run, Margery, run and see what’s the matter!” exclaimed Mrs. Grubb; and her heart misgave her, as she afterwards said, “that something was wrong, for it was not like his usual manner of ringing.” So she followed Margery, anticipating that the poor gentleman was taken suddenly ill or had fallen down in a fit of apoplexy; and into a fit he certainly had fallen, but it was a fit of passion.

“Send your mistress here directly!” were the first words that met her ear. So she entered the parlour forthwith, and beheld Mr. Jenkins and Margery standing opposite each other, he trembling with rage and she with fear. Between them was the table, on which lay a folio volume, opened at a place whence a leaf had evidently been abstracted. Such matters being out of her line, Mrs. Grubb took no notice of it, but, advancing a few steps, expressed a hope that nothing particular was the matter.

“Look ye, madam,” said the Cambrian, scarcely able to utter his words, “look here—there is a leaf gone! It was a perfect copy; I collated it myself—she must have torn it out. What have you done with it, you hussy?—tell me. Find it, if you can, and perhaps I’ll forgive you.”

“I’m sure I don’t know nothing on it,” growled Margery, sulkily, and playing with the corner of her apron.

“Why have you dared to touch Mr. Jen-

kins's books?" exclaimed the widow; "you know as I told you never to meddle with 'em."

"It is of no use to deny it," said the Welshman: "I see guilt in her countenance."

Here followed a variety of oaths, which may be imagined by the reader who has seen an ancient Briton in a state of high excitement. Margery hereupon burst out a-crying.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Jenkins, sinking in a state of exhaustion into a chair, "there was not such another copy of 'Baker's Chronicle' in all London!"

"La! sir," said the widow, "pray don't take on in this way about it; you'll make yourself ill, you will indeed. I don't think it's any of her doings—if I did, I'm sure I don't know what I wouldn't do to her; but she can't read, and so what should she want with it? I dare say it was so when you bought it."

"Don't talk to me so," groaned Mr. Jenkins; "I tell you it was perfect."

A sudden and, as she thought, very bright

idea now flashed across Jemima Euphemia's mind: she feared that Margery was the delinquent, but hoped she had it in her power to make an offer that would more than compensate for the damage, and therefore, in a conciliating and self-complacent manner, observed, " I don't purtend to understand or vally books like you, sir, and can't say as ever I heard talk o' the bakers' chronicle before: but I've got a heap o' the Morning Chronicle as'd make a bigger book than that if they was bound up together. We used to take it in when we was in the eating-line, and I don't think there's many o' them much the worse, only a little bit greased, perhaps, here and there. Howsum-ever, sitch as they are, I'm sure they're very much at your service; so don't take on so about a single leaf."

As has been said before, the Cambrian was a good-natured soul at bottom, and on any other occasion might have been moved with the sacrifice that the widow was willing to make for

his comfort, but now he was touched in his most sensitive point, and replied to her offer only by an ungracious "Pish!"

"Well, sir, I can't do no more than offer sitch as I've got," added Mrs. Grubb, "and I'm sure you're kindly welcome to 'em if so be as they'll be of any sarvice."

"Hark ye, madam," said Mr. Jenkins, recovered somewhat, and speaking in a determined tone, "this is no trifling business, let me tell you, and I will have it sifted to the bottom. I leave my property in your custody, and shall hold you responsible; you and your servant are the only persons who have any business in this room. I tell you at once I don't suspect you, but she shall go before a magistrate with me directly, and somehow or other we will come at the truth."

"La! sir," exclaimed Mrs. Grubb, "I'm sure I hope you wouldn't go to do sitch a thing as to ruin a poor girl's character and bring discredit upon the house, when, maybe——"

“ Let her tell the truth at once, then !”
roared Mr. Jenkins.

“ Come, Margery,” said the widow, “ it’s no use crying and taking on that way ; why don’t you speak and tell the gentleman, if so be as you knows anything consarning this here business ? I dare say Mr. Jinkins will forgive you if you speak the truth, for it ain’t in his nature to pussecute folks nor to bear malice. Come, speak up ; you know as I told you how perticlar he was consarning his books, and you mustn’t touch ’em on no account whatsomever.”

“ Yes,” blubbered Margery, “ but why did you skinflint me, then, about the wood ? you know what a rumpus you kicked up when I axed you for another penn’orth to light the fire with afore the week was out.”

This was but too true, as the thrifty landlady, determined to save at all points, had diminished the quantity of fire-wood to the amount specified.

“ You oudacious hussy !” she exclaimed “ to tell me so, when you know I never grudged nothing in reason. Don’t believe a word she says, sir ; I’m sure she’d always wood enough in all conscience if she wouldn’t burn it to waste. Ah ! sir, you don’t know what it is to have to do with sarvents ; if they wasn’t looked after, they ’d eat and burn one out of house and home. It was but t’other night as I caught her with one candle burning on the kitchen-table, and another——”

“ Pray be silent, madam !” said Mr. Jenkins, with a look of reproach ; and then, forcing himself to speak with something like calmness, he addressed Margery. “ You little know, young woman, the mischief you have done ; but the only compensation you can make to me is, to confess the whole truth : do not conceal anything, and then, perhaps, I may be able to repair the damage.”

At this moment he was visited by a glimpse of hope consequent upon the recollection of a

mutilated copy of "Baker" exposed upon a bookstall, and which might probably serve to restore his own to its former perfect state.

"I 'm sure, sir," replied the repentant Margery, "I wouldn't ha' gone to ha' done it if I thought it 'd ha' been missed; but in sitch a big book as that ere I thought it couldn't argufy nothing about a leaf or two, perticklar as I minded not to take them as had pictures on 'em."

At this information, the bibliomaniac uttered a deep groan, and rested his head upon his left hand in silence for some moments, while his right hand mechanically turned the leaves of the folio, as if to discover the extent of his losses. At length he looked up, and with quivering lips said, "How many leaves do you suppose you may have taken?"

"I don't think as I took more than two," replied Margery, "but I 'm sure—sartain sure as it can't ha' been more than three, for I never took no more than one at a time out of never a

book, and I took 'em by turns as they stands, and hadn't ha gone round the third time when you left off fires."

As she spake thus, the Cambrian sat listening to her, as if he could not credit his ears: his eyes stared wildly, and for a second or two his countenance was of a deadly paleness—then it became suddenly and violently flushed.

"You infernal!" he exclaimed; but he could utter no more, and, starting up, he rushed to the fire-place and seized the poker. As he turned sharply round and advanced with the formidable weapon, the widow and Margery both made their escape screaming, the maid to her garret, and the mistress to the kitchen, which she reached not without a fall, which at any other moment would have alarmed the whole house. Instead of inquiring if she was hurt, Mr. Jenkins violently shut the door of his room, and for half an hour afterward was heard pacing to and fro, moving heavy books, and throwing them on the floor. Having then

ascertained the state of irreparable ruin to which his collection of folios was reduced, he let himself out at the street-door, vowing never again to darken it with his presence.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT two hours after Mr. Jenkins's abrupt departure, a hackney-coach stopped at the widow's door. She was at the moment deeply engaged in venting her wrath and indignation upon Margery, and ever and anon it seemed as though she was on the point of proceeding to acts of personal violence. The knocking at the door interrupted this stormy scene. Margery flew to attend the summons, and her mistress, following more slowly, reached the passage in time to hear the words, "I am come to take away Mr. Jenkins's books."

They were uttered by a stout, middle-aged man, who was accompanied by another somewhat younger.

“La! sir,” said the widow, “I hope Mr. Jenkins won’t go to do nothing percipitately. He is a little hastyish sometimes; but, when he comes to himself and we talks the matter over, I’m sure he’ll listen to reason, and see as it was none o’ my fault.”

“I can’t say anything to that, ma’am,” replied the stranger; “I am his bookseller, and here is his order for you to deliver up to me the whole of his library.”

Jemima Euphemia did all she could to obtain a postponement of this removal till the following day, by which time, she said, she was sure Mr. Jenkins would “come to himself;” but the bookseller was not to be persuaded.

One coach-load had already departed, when a gentleman in black arrived, and announced himself as Mr. Jenkins’s lawyer and particular friend. “I am commissioned, madam,” said he, “to remove every article of his property from your house; I have his keys and an order to that effect.”

The widow remonstrated as before.

“ It is of no use talking and wasting time, my good woman,” replied the lawyer ; “ I expect a cart and two porters here directly. My friend will, I hope, be somewhat calmer to-morrow ; but you will never see him again in this house.”

The cart arrived and the packing and moving proceeded rapidly, while the widow sat upon the stairs alternately weeping and giving vent to imprecations against Margery. At length, when the greater part of her late lodger's goods and chattels had disappeared, she began to feel uneasy concerning the payment of the rent, and to make all sure, arose and told the lawyer that she should not allow any more things to go till that was settled.

“ You have already received five pounds on account of the present quarter,” observed the lawyer ; “ so there remains between seventeen and eighteen pounds ?”

“ Yes,” said the widow.

“ Ah !” continued the lawyer, “ my friend is very correct and punctual in his accounts : he has left the arrangement to me.”

“ Oh ! I beg your pardon, sir,” said Mrs. Grubb, “ I didn’t mean no offence ; only it’s very hard upon a poor lone woman as can hardly make both ends meet. I didn’t think as Mr. Jenkins would ha’ gone to ha’ sarved me in this manner, after he had been so long with me and I’d done everything in my power to accommodate him, perticklar as he knows it ain’t my fault about them two or three leaves out of his old books. I don’t see what call he had to leave me, when I’d ha’ turned that ere hussy about her business, and that’s what I will, as sure as my name’s Eupheemy.”

To these and other pleadings the lawyer paid no attention, but went on with his task of giving directions, till at length the whole of Mr. Jenkins’s property was off the premises.

“ And now, ma’m,” said he, “ we will talk about the rent, if you please.”

“ Yes, sir,” replied the widow, taking out her pocket-book, there’s the quarter, all but five pounds; and then there’s milk and coals for eight weeks, and a bottle o’ blacking, and candles, and bread, and so on: I ain’t made the bill out exactly, because I couldn’t expect to be so taken at a nonplush; but I’ll soon tell ye what they all comes to, if you’ll just sit down a minute.”

“ It’s not worth while to give yourself the trouble, ma’am,” observed the lawyer, drily; “ I told you that Mr. Jenkins left the arrangement with me, and, if you hadn’t been a widow, I should have recommended him to bring an action against you for the value of the books destroyed; but as for paying you anything, that is quite out of the question. You may be very thankful that you got the five pounds beforehand, or else——”

“ Not pay me !” exclaimed the incensed widow—“ but I *will* be paid ! Don’t tell me ! I ain’t to be swindled out o’ house and home

in that 'ere manner, not I ! I *will* be paid, I tell you !”

“ I wish you a good afternoon, ma'm,” said the lawyer, with provoking coolness.

He was a tall, stout man, whose passage it was ridiculous for “ a lone woman ” to attempt to dispute ; but, nevertheless, Jemima Euphemia placed herself between him and the door, declaring that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and that, if her husband had been alive, neither he nor Mr. Jenkins would have dared to use her so.

“ My time is too valuable, madam,” said he, “ to be wasted in this manner : there is my card, if you think fit to employ a lawyer ; but I recommend you to be thankful that it is no worse. So, please to move out of the way,” and, laying hold of the door, he opened it, not without some resistance on the part of the widow. “ Good afternoon, madam,” he then repeated with the same *sangfroid*, and the moment after he likewise had quitted the premises.

“ See what you have brought me to, you wretch !” cried Mrs. Grubb, rushing furiously into the kitchen. “ This is what one gets by taking people out o’ charity !”

Now it so happened that Captain Brown had, on the preceding evening, given Margery a proof of his satisfaction at the manner in which she had latterly attended to his comforts. The linendraper likewise had not forgotten her at his departure, so the poor girl had nothing further to expect for a long time, save from Mr. Jenkins ; therefore during the moving scene, which shut out all hopes from that quarter, she had been reflecting on her situation, and came to the resolution of quitting her place at the first convenient opportunity, just as the widow pounced in upon her, uttering the above ungracious salutation.

“ Charity, indeed !” retorted Margery ; “ precious charity, to be sure ! — to work a body’s heart and soul out from morning to night, and all for nothing !”

“What ! you oudacious slut !” screamed her mistress ; “after you have pretty well ruined me, do you purtend to abuse me ? Don’t you know that you ’re subjected to go to prison this minute for stealing ?”

“You might ha’ knowed as I couldn’t light the fires without wood,” said Margery ; “but that’s the way—you grudges every farden : I’m sure I’ve been half-starved sometimes. Charity, indeed ! And then it’s scold, scold, scold all day long. One’d better be a nigger at once nor live in sitch a place. I’m sick and tired out, and that’s the truth.”

“I’m a good mind to send you packing about your business directly,” cried the widow, adding certain very inelegant epithets.

“As for that, mum,” replied Margery, “you’ve no call to be very perticklar ; I’m sure I’m ready enough to go.”

What passed afterwards was somewhat too violent and abusive to be given in detail ; but the result was, that Margery ascended to her

garret, whence she shortly returned with a bundle and a bandbox, with which she passed forth into the street without the ceremony of leavetaking.

Left in sole possession of her house, to sit up for the late arrival of her only lodger, the widow's ruminations were of a very sombre nature. No doubt now remained on her mind respecting the cause of her disasters. She decided that the house was certainly bewitched; and the parrot, who had been aroused by the bustle of the day, every moment exclaimed, "I pay the lodgings! I pay the lodgings!" as if to remind her of the prophecy of the little old lady. The watchman, in due course, proclaimed "Past twelve," and then "Past one o'clock." Jemima had long been sleepy, and now began to doze; for though she usually contrived to keep herself and those about her awake during the day, she had no talent for nocturnal watchings; so, after grumbling, yawning, and nodding, she commenced a good

sound regular snoring, from which she was aroused by a thundering knock at the door, accompanied by a violent ringing of the bell.

“Hoity, toity!” cried she, rubbing her eyes and taking up the candle, “why, the man must be out of his mind to make such a kick up of a noise at this time o’ night: it’s enough to wake all the neighbourhood, and bring a bad name on my house. I’ll have no sitch doings!”

When she opened the door, the Captain stared and muttered, “Whe-es Ma-a-gy? A bin kno-ock-en a ’alf-’our: thought oo was a-bed. Ne’mind! Gi’ mer a can-nel. Good so-ort o’ ooman enough, Missus Gup, da’say, only ver’ sle-eepy, so m’ur—go to bed.”

It was very evident that her lodger had been dining out, so the widow prudently forbore to say anything about the tremendous knocking; and having furnished him with a candle, had the satisfaction of seeing him reel up stairs, singing, “Ool, Bittanny!—Bittanny

ools 'e waves — And Bittons nevy, nevy sall
be saves !”

“ Mercy upon us !” she exclaimed, “ he 'll
set the house afire, as sure as I'm a living
woman. That 's the way — all one's troubles
comes one atop of another : and that ungrate-
ful warment of a girl to leave me in this here
predicament !”

The idea of going to bed before the cap-
tain's light was extinguished, was out of the
question ; accordingly she seated herself upon
the stairs, opposite his door, and continued to
watch while he moved to and fro in his cham-
ber, singing at intervals, and apparently in no
great haste to retire. The widow grumbled,
and yawned, and, in spite of her dread of fire,
had nearly fallen asleep ere the gleam of light
below the door disappeared ; then she arose,
and crept up stairs to her own room on the
third floor, to seek repose. More than half-
asleep, she let her clothes fall in all directions,
put out her candle, and threw herself into

bed; but scarcely had she settled her position there, ere she was aroused by a violent ringing of the captain's bell, and the moment after his voice was heard on the staircase calling out for "Ma-a-gy," and "Missus Gup!"

"What is the matter, sir?" she cried, putting her head out of the door.

"Cuss mer 'f ur know," replied the lodger; "but ur think mur bed's bewitched—is tunned 'ound, or topsy-turvy, or something o' the so't; oo must come and set it to 'ights."

"La! sir, exclaimed Jemima Euphemia, "I'm sure there ain't nothing the matter wi' the bed, and I can't come, for I ha'n't got nothing on."

"No mo' 'ave I," said the captain, "but oo must come, as I ain't disposed to bivouack on the staies."

The widow was about to withdraw in anger, when the real state of the case flashed upon her; Margery had, in her sudden departure, omitted the ceremony of turning down the

sheets. It was in vain that she attempted to explain this to her lodger; he either could not or would not understand her, and she was obliged to descend *en déshabille*, to perform the office of chambermaid. As the dawn was now breaking, this was very mortifying to her feelings, and was rendered still more so by certain jokes which the captain hazarded under the influence of wine. The consequence was, that she made her final retreat in no complacent mood. But Morpheus is a powerful calmer of angry emotions, and his hand was upon her; so she sank into his arms, and for a while forgot her troubles, after the fashion of a passionate child that has cried itself to sleep.

It was almost ten o'clock in the morning ere she woke, and then followed a variety of minor miseries. The kitchen-fire was to be lighted; the milkwoman had long since gone her rounds; the passage and staircase were in a very untidy state, owing to the moving out of Mr. Jenkins's goods on the preceding day; bread and rolls were to be fetched from the baker's; and

milk begged or borrowed for her own and the captain's breakfast ; and his usual demand for hot-water might be expected to commence every minute. The widow bustled about, and fumed, and fretted, and talked of Margery's ingratitude, but at length got through her work and sat down to breakfast, with the consolation that she had only one mouth to feed instead of two. When she had thus somewhat refreshed herself, her sole remaining lodger began to move, and again she was obliged to be on the alert. He had some indistinct recollection of being jocular on the preceding night, and when Mrs. Grubb attended him at breakfast, made a sort of apology, by saying he was "af'aid" he had been "ood." But she had had time to reflect, and resolved to enact the amiable ; therefore she observed with a smile that there was "nothing the matter," and then proceeded to tell him of her disasters, of Margery's ingratitude, and Mr. Jenkins's friend's refusal to pay his rent.

"Ah ! ur's no ge-entleman," observed the

captain, yawning ; “ oo may see ’at by er way er de-esses.”

“ I ’m determined to have my money,” said the widow ; “ I ain’t to be choused out o’ between twenty and thirty pounds for two or three musty old leaves.”

“ ’At ’s right !” yawned her lodger—“ a-a-est ’im, b’ all means.”

“ That ’s what I will,” said Jemima Euphemia, “ as sure as his name ’s Jenkins, if he doesn’t come down with the money instantaneously ;” and, growing warm with her subject, she continued to talk incessantly, to the great annoyance of the captain ; but she, like many others who are fond of hearing themselves talk, mistook silence for attention, or rather, perhaps, did not trouble herself to examine the effect of her eloquence. The consequence was, that when the captain found himself alone, he decided that she was an insufferable bore, and that, if she did not very shortly get another servant in Margery’s place, he

should change his quarters : he then proceeded to the important duties of the toilet, which usually occupied him the greater part of the morning.

In the mean while the widow came to the economical resolution of doing the whole of the household work herself till she should be fortunate enough to let her vacant apartments. “ Reckoning wages, and waste of one kind and another,” said she, “ that ’ll make a pound a-week difference pretty nigh, and ‘ a penny saved is a penny earned.’ ” This, to be sure, was but poor comfort to her on the arrival of quarter-day with empty rooms ; and she sighed as she placed another announcement of “ Lodgings for a single gentleman,” in one of the ground-floor windows.

“ I ’ll pay the lodgings ! ” screamed the parrot, on her return to her own little back-room. “ I ’ve a great mind to wring your head off ! that ’s what I have,” cried the widow : “ I do believe it ’s you, you nasty bird ! as ’ve brought

me all this bad luck. I wish I'd never set eyes on ye !”

Hereupon the incorrigible Poll vociferated the offensive cry still louder ; and as the day was fine, and the front parlour now at her own disposal, the widow repaired there with her work, to beguile the time till the captain should go out, after which she resolved to go and dun Mr. Jenkins at his office, and “ make him ashamed of himself.” The weather being warm, she threw up the window and commenced busily plying her needle, and occasionally making her observations on the passers by. Then she began again to ruminate on the possible bewitchment of her house, and the more she thought of her mishaps, the more probable it appeared, notwithstanding that she often muttered to herself, “ I don't believe in any such nonsense !”

She had occupied her post about an hour, and was lost in a disagreeable reverie, when she was startled by a shrill voice, exclaiming —

“ Lodgings on the ground floor ! — Lodgings on the first floor ! — Lodgings on the third floor ! ” The widow looked out, and must have been greatly struck by what she saw and heard, as she was, for the moment, utterly incapable of speaking. Immediately opposite to her stood the little old lady, leaning against the rails of the area, by which she supported herself with her left hand, while she waved her right arm about in the same singular manner as on their former interviews. “ Yes,” she continued, “ one, two, three are gone ! The other is going ! And pretty Poll alone will remain to pay the lodgings, Lodgings to let ! Lodgings to let ! Lodgings to let ! Ha, ha, ha ! He, he, he ! Ho, ho, ho ! ”

“ Hark ye, mum,” cried the incensed widow, “ they ain’t to be let to you nohow ; so you may as well take yourself off, and not kick up a rumpus in the street, or I ’ll send for a constable ! ”

“ Who will you send ? ” inquired the little lady, with a sneer. “ No, no — don’t think

to deceive *me* !— I know all ; so just open the door and let me in, and perhaps we may be able to agree about the house now.”

“ Never, as long as the house is mine !” exclaimed Mrs. Grubb— “ no, don’t you believe it ; I ’d as soon let in old Scratch !”

“ Well then,” said the little old lady, “ let the spell work on for another quarter. You will repent—you will repent—you will repent !” and waving her arm as before, she tripped nimbly off towards the Strand.

When she was gone, the widow felt, as she expressed, “ all of a tremble ;” but, perhaps because it was daylight, her trembling appears to have been caused as much by indignation as fear, since she immediately gave vent to her excitement by exclaiming — “ Ain’t it enough as I ’m subjugated to be swindled out o’ my money, and be made ’sponsible about them books as I ’d no consarn in, and be abused before my face by that wagabone of a hussy as I took in from charity, and kepted up all night

and roused out o' my bed by the captain, but I must be parsecuted by witches too, or mad women, I don't know which?"

As she uttered these words, she retreated to the back room, where the parrot hailed her with the old cry of "I'll pay the lodgings!" "Will you?" screamed the widow, furiously, "we'll see that. No—I'll take care that that part of the prophecy sha'n't come true. You sha'n't remain till the last, anyhow; I'll soon settle your business, and then the spell will be broken perhaps." Even as she spake she seized the cage, resolved to sacrifice Poll and to break the charm; but Poll instinctively perceived that her designs were evil, and being armed with a beak and claws, made such use of them, that its mistress was compelled to relinquish the conflict after being severely scratched and bitten.

"We fly by night!" screamed the victorious bird. "Ah!" cried the widow, shuddering, "that's it! How could I be so blind? Ah!

I know you now — you 're a witch in disguise. I 've never had no luck since you 've been in the house. It 's no use trying to kill you, I know that ; but I can get rid of you, that 's one comfort ; I can sell you, and that 's what I will afore I 'm a day older."

Now, on the opposite side of the street lived another widow, whose house was full of respectable lodgers, and to her Mrs. Grubb resolved to sell Poll, partly because the said widow had often admired the said bird, and partly perhaps with the idea that its presence would set the opposite lodgers in motion, and they would consequently want accommodation elsewhere. No sooner, therefore, had Captain Brown gone out for the day, than Jemima Euphemia, having washed and applied sticking-plaister to her wounds, sallied forth across the street, on a friendly visit to the widow Smith, to whom, after some preliminary conversation, she stated her intention of parting with pretty Poll for the moderate sum of five guineas. Mrs. Smith

observed that it was more than she could afford to pay, and thereupon a chaffering and cheapening, and praising and deteriorating, of the bird and its cage commenced, as usual in such cases. At length the bargain was concluded for two guineas, and Mrs. Grubb, to make all sure, instantly went home and returned forthwith carrying the cage in triumph ; and having received the money, felt her mind relieved, as from a heavy weight. “ Come,” said she, “ there ’s an end of the prophecies now, at all events, and of the witchcraft too, it is to be hoped, so I ’ll go now and look after Mr. Jenkins ;” and, putting on her best bonnet, she bustled off to Somerset House. Never having entered the building before, she inquired for her late lodger of the first person she met, and he unluckily was a wag, just coming out of the Exhibition.

“ Oh yes, madam,” he replied, pointing to the door, “ I know Mr. Jenkins perfectly — a very stout gentleman, just as you describe.

He is this moment gone up those stairs, and you will be sure to overtake him as he moves very slow.” (

Jemima returned thanks in her best manner, and proceeded in the direction indicated, but was soon stopped, and requested to pay a shilling. It was in vain that she protested and declared that she did not want to see the pictures, but only to speak to “Mr. Jenkins.” The inexorable moneytaker told her that she must either pay or go about her business, as he could not suffer her to remain blocking up the passage; so at last she pulled out her purse, and, with a sigh, made the necessary deposit, under an impression that Mr. Jenkins was employed in that department of the mansion. Having made her way up stairs, and mingled with the moving, well-dressed crowd, she became every moment more bewildered. There were fat gentlemen in abundance, but the one she sought was nowhere to be seen, though she persevered in going the circuit of

all the rooms, till, from weariness, she was obliged to sit down upon a vacant seat, where she resolved to wait and observe the passers-by. She had not long occupied her post ere she caught sight of Captain Brown at some distance, and upon which she started up, and made her way through the throng towards him, in a style that attracted general attention.

“La! sir,” she exclaimed, “I’m so glad to see you! I can’t see nothing o’ Mr. Jenkins, though I knows he’s here somewhere. You ha’n’t seen him, have you? I’m detarmined to have my money, that’s what I am. And I won’t pay my shilling for nothing, that’s what I won’t: more shame for them to take it, when I told ’em as I didn’t want to see the pictures, not I.”

During this unexpected and unwelcome address, the captain’s face became suffused with a crimson tint, as he was unfortunately engaged in performing the office of *cicerone* to a party of *elegantes*, from whom he was separated at the

moment while they were closely examining one of Wilkie's paintings. But they were too near not to have heard all, and he felt that their attention was excited, though he did not dare to turn towards them. Moreover, it was not Mrs. Grubb's language alone that was objectionable; but neither her new bonnet nor her other equipments were at all in accordance with those of the rest of the fair sex then and there present.

The captain was taken so completely by surprise that he could not utter a word; and the widow, observing the unusual redness of his countenance, and mistaking the cause of that and his silence, continued, "La! captain, I declare you're just as I was but a bit ago; I was obligated to sit down. It's terrible hot, ain't it? and you feels it too more to-day, because o' last night's doings. When gentlemen takes a drop too much over-night, they must expect to suffer for it next morning. I remember my poor Timothy——"

"Cuss 'oo and 'oo Timmity too!" muttered

the captain; and at the same instant a stifled giggling was heard to proceed from the little group of fair ones almost at his elbow, as they moved onward, unable longer to retain their gravity.

At this disrespectful mention of the defunct, the widow became red in her turn, but contrived to check the expression of her feelings by the consideration that the loss of another lodger could in no wise benefit poor Timothy. The captain, however, perceived the storm gathering, and, dreading an explosion, suddenly changed his tone, and informed her graciously that he had not seen Mr. Jenkins, and should have felt very happy to assist her in her search, had he not been particularly engaged with a party of friends. Then, with a patronising smile, he wished her a good morning, and tripped off in pursuit of his fair charge.

After a little more walking, Mrs. Grubb became convinced that she was on a wrong scent, and therefore made her exit; and, in conse-

quence of a further explanation with the door-keeper, commenced a round of visits to the different government-offices, in which heavy, slow-moving persons are by no means uncommon, perhaps in consequence of the abundance of fat places. She toiled and puffed, up-stairs and down stairs, above ground and under ground, if not with alacrity, at least with perseverance, till she discovered the place where Mr. Jenkins usually spent his mornings, but not till after he had taken his departure.

“ Will you leave any message, ma’am ? ” inquired a junior-clerk.

“ No, no, ” replied the widow ; “ only tell him my name is Grubb, and I ’ll call agin to-morrow. He ’ll guess my business, I ’ll be bound—that is, if it ’s the same Mr. Jenkins as I wants ; but this here place is like Noah’s ark, there’s no finding one’s way about it. You couldn’t tell me, could you, sir, if I couldn’t find him nowhere else ? ”

“ No, ma’am, ” replied the young man, “ I

cannot direct you, for he left his old lodgings yesterday, and means to look out for others to-day, if he is well enough ; but he has been very poorly and low-spirited all the morning."

" Ah ! I shouldn't wonder," observed the widow ; " but howsomever, I'll call agin to-morrow, as it's him as I wants sure enough." And forthwith she took leave, and returned home.

Nothing particular occurred during the remainder of that day. The captain came home early and retired to rest, after replying to her observations, somewhat more stiffly than usual, merely by " Ha-as" and " E-ems."

On the following morning, too, he listened to the recital of her adventures and complaints with the resignation of one who is resolved rather to endure a nuisance for a while patiently than run the risk of increasing it by a vain opposition.

When he was gone out, Mrs. Grubb again went to Somerset House, where she learned that Mr. Jenkins, in consequence of ill-health,

had obtained leave of absence for a month, and was most likely gone into the country. This was a sad disappointment, as she had calculated upon his money towards the payment of her quarter's rent. To be sure, she had enough by her in gold; but that she was determined not to part with, and so came to the unwise resolution of dunning the captain.

“It's no more than axing for my own,” said she, “and it can't make no difference to him whether he pays now or a week or two hence, and I must say he's very reg'lar.”

Now there was nothing which the half-pay “exquisite” dreaded so much as that he should be suspected of poverty. His pride was to be considered as perfectly at ease in his circumstances; and the little shifts and contrivances to which he was obliged to have recourse, in order to eke out his income, were ever studiously glossed over with the names of ease, comfort, and peculiarity of taste: he had even condescended to explain these matters to Margery,

as well as to her mistress. Consequently, when the latter made her application, and he was totally divested of the means of complying with it, his face became redder than at their meeting in the exhibition.

“ ‘Eally, Missis Gup,” he stammered at length, “ ‘eally—’pon ma wud, a sca-acely know what to do. If you ’d a spoke to ma befoe, ’t ’d ha’ made no manna o’ diffe-ence; but am pe-etty ce-etain ma agent is in ’e count-e-ey, and a don’t happen t’have so much ba ma. Ne’m mind—see about ’t: sall want a ’ittle mo’ hot wa’, please.”

But, while he was “ seeing about it,” her landlord paid Jemima a visit, and when she “ put him off,” did not exactly behave with his wonted urbanity, for he began not to like the appearance of things; and she also began to feel uneasy concerning the possible repetition of such scenes as had formerly discomfited her, when compelled unwillingly to abandon the “ eating-line.”

A fortnight thus elapsed, and then the captain gave her notice that he should quit his lodgings at the end of the following week, when he would finally settle all arrears. The only reason he alleged for moving was, that it was not “’espectable” to live in a house where no servant was kept. The widow endeavoured, as usual, to argue the point; but he cut the matter short by informing her that it was all settled, as he had already engaged other lodgings.

“This comes of working one’s heart and soul out to please people,” said the widow to herself.

It was indeed a heavy blow to her, for she had found much consolation and took no small pride in her recent feats of industry, often observing that the house had never been so neat and tidy as since Margery’s departure.

The fatal day too soon came. Captain Brown paid her in full of all demands, thanked her politely for all past attentions, and went off

with his moveables in a hackney-coach, leaving her in whole and sole possession of the entire house.

“ Well,” groaned the widow, as she lay upon her lonely pillow that night, striving to catch at something wherewith to comfort herself, “ I don’t believe in the bewitchment after all ; my lodgers are all gone, to be sure, but there’s no pretty Poll left to pay the lodgings, and so the charm’s broke and that mad woman’s prophecy’s come to nothing. I can’t think how I could ever have come to think anything of it, nor how I could ever ha’ taken a liking to the bird, not I, a nasty creature !—*pretty* Poll, indeed !”

This soliloquy, however, tended but little to dispel her real apprehensions, and, when at length she fell asleep, she was troubled with very unpleasant dreams, in most of which the little old lady figured conspicuously. It was in the dead of night when she awoke, and, turning herself round, uttered a deep groan.

It seemed to her at the moment as if it was repeated by some one in the room, and for a while she lay trembling and listening attentively. All was silent, and she had almost succeeded in persuading herself that the sound was the work of her own fancy, when she distinctly heard an odd sort of rustling noise at the top of her bed. After thinking as well as she was able, she decided that it must be the cat, and, summoning all her resolution, she called out "Puss! poor Puss!" while the sound of her own voice, breaking the silence, increased her terror. For a few seconds all was still; so she repeated the call with somewhat more confidence, adding a few coaxing words, and to the latter, perhaps, may be attributed what followed. The rustling recommenced—then it ceased—and then, as she was all attention, a shrill cry of "I'll pay the lodgings! I'll pay the lodgings!" told her that the prophecy was accomplished. To account for this it is merely necessary to state that, in the days when

pretty Poll was in favour, she had often taken her to her own room; so, when the bird had been let loose on the preceding day, it had taken advantage of open windows and unclipped wings to pay a visit to its old quarters. Mrs. Grubb instantly pronounced sentence of death upon her nocturnal visiter, but was not foolhardy enough to attempt to carry it into execution in the dark; and, by the time daylight arrived, very prudently reflected that her vengeance would cost her at least two guineas. So Poll was safely returned to Mrs. Smith, after undergoing as severe a chastisement as her former mistress dared to inflict.

The next few weeks were spent in vain lamentations and frequent unsuccessful visits to Somerset House; but the latter were put an end to before Mr. Jenkins's return, as he sent her the amount of her demand upon him, with the request that he might never see her face again.

“ You can form little idea, madam,” said his agent, “ of the injury you have done him; but

I trust it will be a warning to you, as you have lost a warm friend and a good lodger, for the sake of saving a penny a-week. It was only the day before he left you that he was speaking to me about your first floor for a client of mine, whom I expected from the country."

"Well, sir," observed Mrs. Grubb, "I hope Mr. Jenkins won't go to bear malice, when he knows I did everything I could to oblige him; and I'm sure if you'll just step up stairs and look at my rooms, you'll see as your friend can't be better situated nowhere; and I turned off that hussy as did all the mischief, though I took her in from charity. We should give and forgive, sir, in this world; so I hope you'll think of me, and what a hard thing it is for a lone woman to be left in an empty house."

Though the widow thus humbled herself, and spake in her most insinuating style, she succeeded only in producing a bitter, sarcastic smile on the countenance of the lawyer, who

briefly observed — “ Yes, madam, I dare say I shall think of you sometimes, and so will my poor friend, I’ll engage for him.” He then stiffly wished her a good morning, and went his way.

It was a weary, melancholy time that followed for the poor woman. The weather became sultry, and the town empty. Now and then a single gentleman, inquiring for lodgings, would afford her an opportunity of repeating her lamentations ; but it so happened, that though her hearers often listened patiently, and some even expressed their commiseration, none of them called again.

In the mean while Mrs. Smith’s house was always full, in spite of the parrot’s presence. “ Ah !” said Mrs. Grubb, “ that’s the way : them as don’t want it always has luck. What call has she to keep a lodging-house, I wonder ? — she as has got a pension from Government because her husband was an officer. Taking the bread out of other people’s mouths

to bring up her daughters, doing nothing but playing on the piany ! I hate the sound of it and the sight of 'em all, that's what I do. Why shouldn't they work and make their way like other folks, I should like to know ?”

From this specimen it may be inferred that the widow's troubles had not the effect of increasing her christian charity, and, in the present instance, she was as unjust as the generality of persons who abandon themselves to envy and murmuring. The Smiths were exceedingly industrious, and the mother's efforts were solely limited to bestowing a good education upon her daughters, by the aid of which she trusted they would be able hereafter to “make their way in the world.” Notwithstanding the parrot and the piano, their's was a quiet house ; its duties were performed with order and regularity ; and the loud scolding of servants, so absolutely necessary in Mrs. Grubb's opinion, was never heard in it. How they came to find servants who

would do their work without, was a mystery which our widow could explain only by referring it to good luck. "Yes," said she, "luck's against me, that's plain!" And though she was ever repeating that she did not believe in any such nonsense, she felt convinced that her house was really bewitched when another quarter-day arrived and found her still in reality "a lone woman." When her landlord came for his rent, she told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself for not reducing it again directly, when he must see very plainly that she could not make both ends meet.

"As for that, ma'm," said he, "that's quite out of the question; as long as you stay in the house you must pay the rent: but if so be as you like to leave it, I can have another tenant directly."

"What will you give me to be off our bargain about the lease?" exclaimed the widow.

"Nothing, ma'am," was the reply; "but if you'll move out before the tenth of October,

I won't charge you anything for the overtime, and will give you three days to consider of it."

Now Mrs. Grubb had, during the period of her loneliness, turned over various plans for the future in her mind, and consulted her former friends, whose counsels she had despised in the commencement of her flourishing speculation; so she made this offer of her landlord's known to them, and the result of their deliberations was an acceptance of it. The next thing was to get settled again, and, after reflecting on the manner in which the "Hot joint concern" had "wound up" under all disadvantages, and that there would be no poor Timothy now to drink the profits, she resolved to embark in a similar undertaking, for which there was "an opening" in the populous neighbourhood of Spitalfields.

Some weeks after she had been fixed in her new abode, and had every reason to be satisfied with the change, she was walking one Sunday afternoon along the Strand, and took

a fancy to have a look at her recent home. “ Ah !” sighed she, “ what a sight o’ money I lost there ! all along of——” She could utter no more, for at the window stood the little old lady, nodding triumphantly, and beckoning her to come in. How Jemima Euphemia made her escape, she knew not, but she vowed never to enter the street again. Curiosity, however, caused her to make subsequent inquiry, by which she discovered that the little old lady had inhabited the house many years before, and on her return from the West Indies, where she had lost her husband, had made instant application to the landlord. She was a droll, shrewd little body, who liked to do everything in an odd manner, and probably was amused at the idea of being taken for a witch, and resolved to avail herself of the notion ; but her own observations, and the very particular inquiry she had made into the widow’s character, conduct, and circumstances, were sufficient, without the aid of witchcraft,

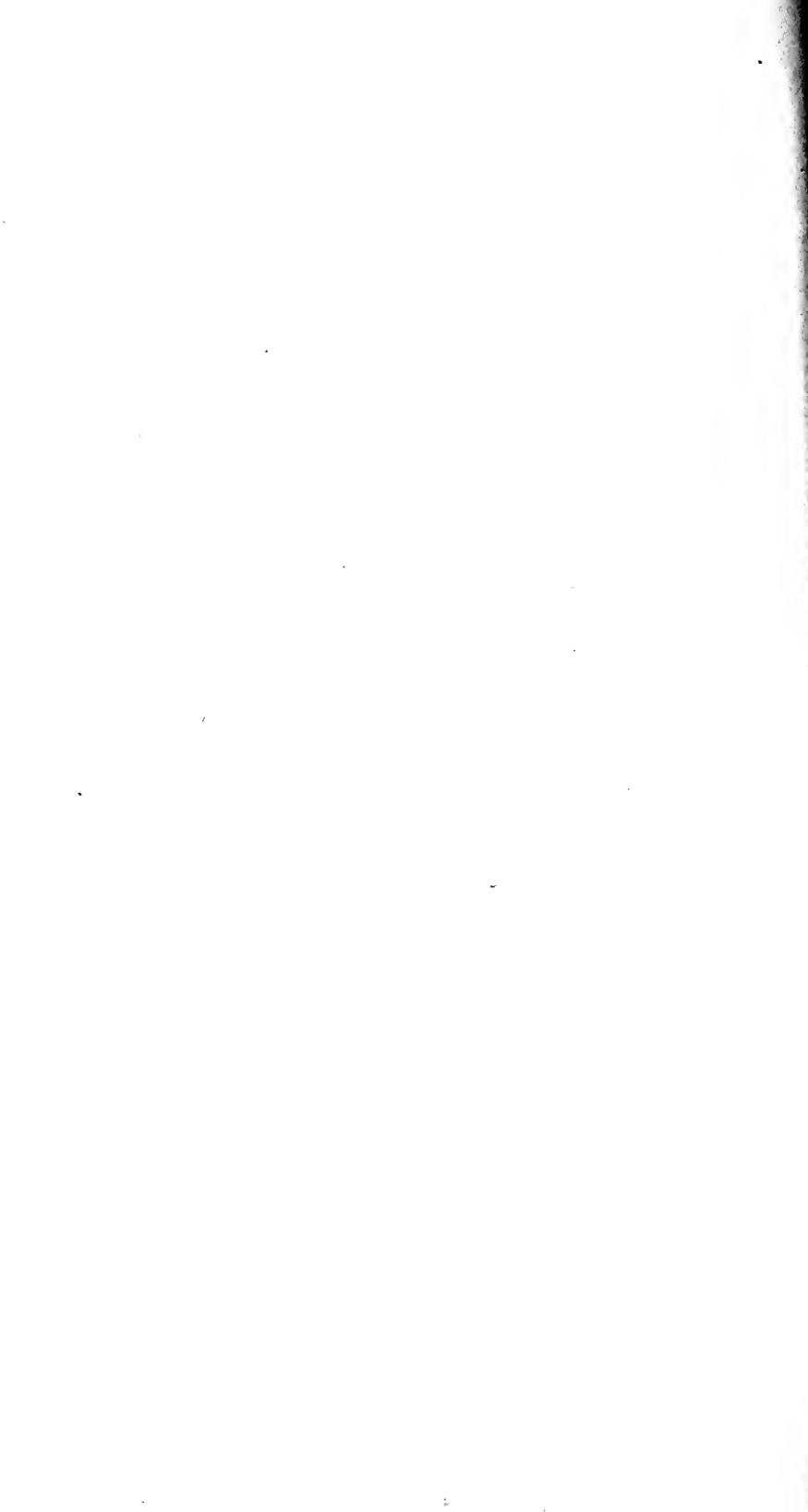
324 THE LODGING-HOUSE BEWITCHED.

to enable her to discern that this poor woman was not likely eventually to succeed, being out of her accustomed sphere. The injudicious attempt at raising the lodgers' rent above the regular price, and the engagement of Margery, were probably the ground-work of her prophecies.

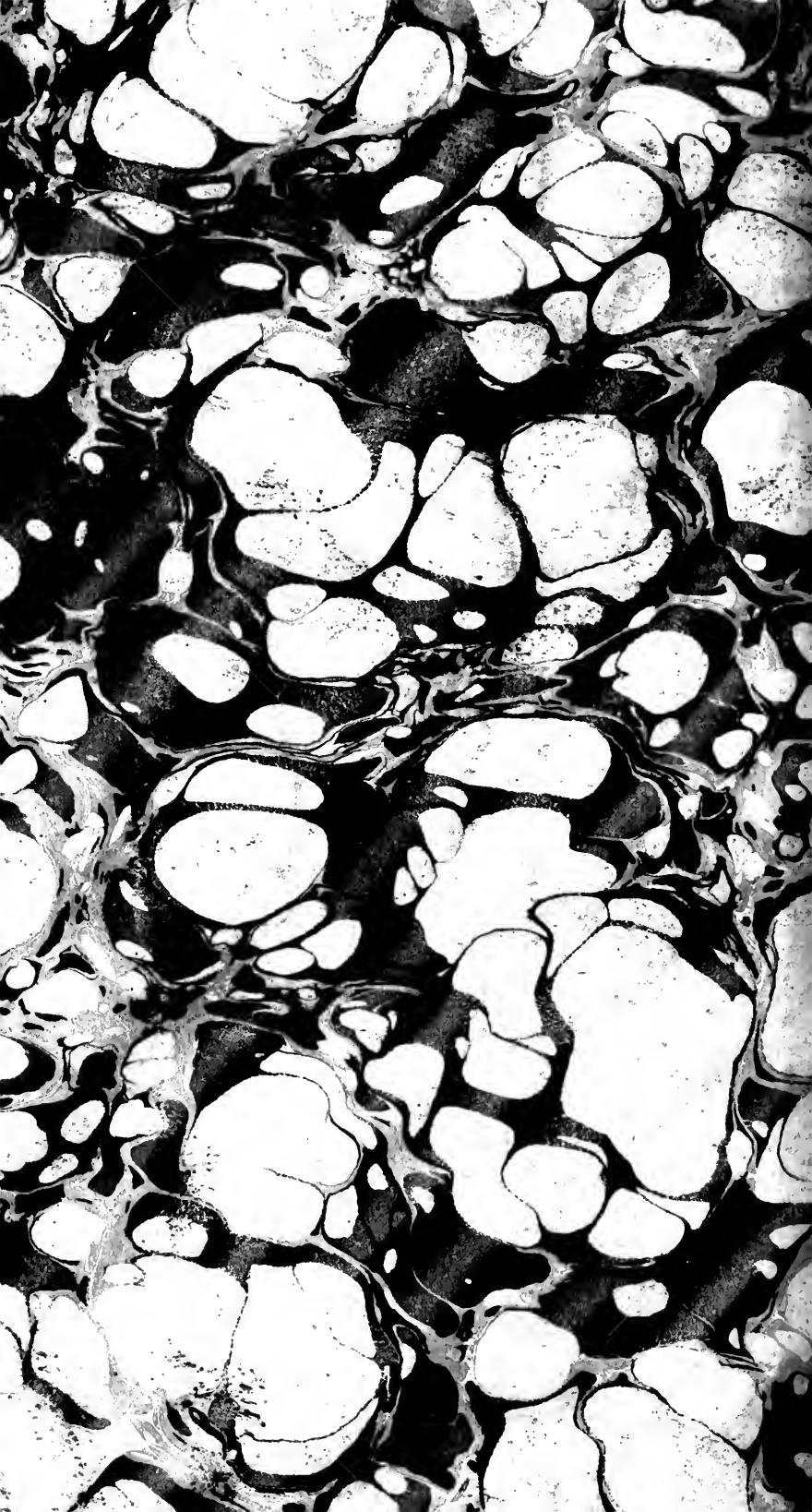
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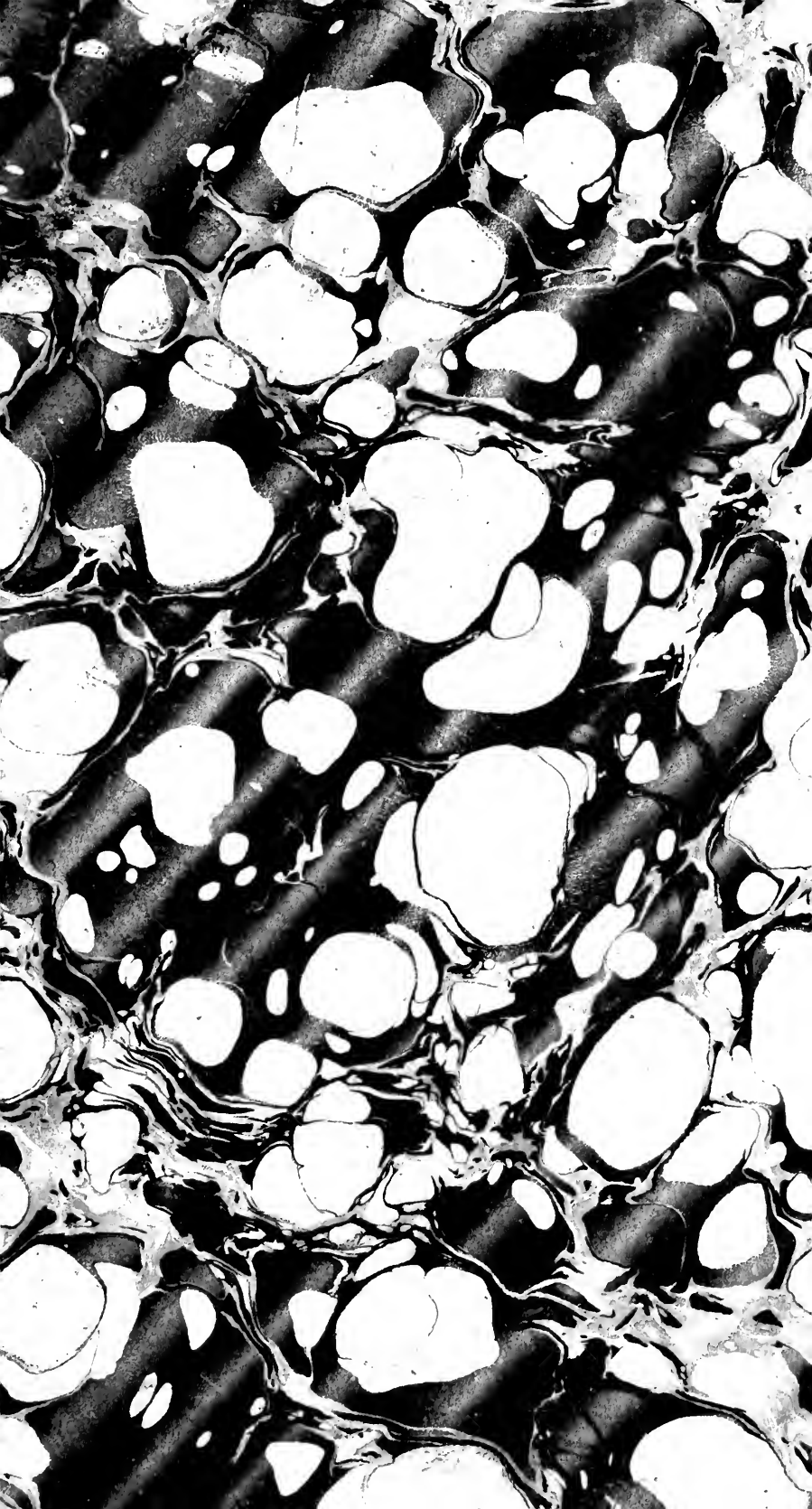
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